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THE
Certainty and Necessity
OF
Religion in General:
Or, The First
GROUNDS & PRINCIPLES
OF
Humane Duty
ESTABLISH'D;



In Eight Sermons Preach'd at S. Martins in the Fields at the Lecture for the Year 1697, founded by the Honorable Robert Boyle, Esquire.

By FRANCIS GASTRELL, B.D. Student
of Christ-Church, Oxon.

LONDON: Printed for Tho. Bennet at the
Half-Moon in S. Paul's Churchyard. 1697.

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Religion in General

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TO THE

Most Reverend Father in God THOMAS
Lord Archbishop of Canterbury;

Sir Henry Ashurst, Baronet;

Sir John Rotheram, Serjeant at Law;

John Evelyn Senior, Esquire;

Trustees by the Appointment of the Hono-
rable ROBERT BOYLE, Esquire.

Most Reverend and Honored,

HAVING by your Appointment
preach'd the following Ser-
mons, and publish'd them by your
Command, I humbly desire this Dedi-
cation of them to you may be accepted
as some Acknowledgment for that
great Trust you have been pleased to
honour me with.

I have nothing to say for the Perfor-
mance, but that I have endeavour'd
all I could to proportion my Care to
the Subject and Design of the Lecture;

and where the Management is faulty; I have reason to hope the Evidence of the Truths I defend will bear me out.

I have taken the Liberty to Print my Sermons all together in a continu'd Discourse, that the Strength of the Proofs there given may appear more plainly from their Connexion.

If it shall please God to render what I have done, in any degree or measure serviceable towards the raising or promoting a Sense of Religion among us, I shall extreamly rejoyce at my Success; and I am sure I shall have my Satisfaction encreased by your Approbation of my Endeavours, and by your farther Protection and Defence of the same Cause in which I am now particularly engaged, and which ought to be the general Concern of Mankind. *I am,*

Most Reverend and Honored,

Your most faithful and obedient Servant,

FRANCIS GASTRELL.

The PREFACE.

IN every Age of the World we have any Account of left us, the Wickedness of Mankind has much the largest share in their History; and if we believed the Complaints of the several Historians who acquaint us with what passed in their days, we should be disposed to conclude, that those particular times we were reading of were certainly a great deal worse than any that went before, and that consequently Vice having been always growing and gathering Strength as the World advanced in Age, the present Generation of Men must far exceed all their Predecessors in Wickedness: but tho' I have a very ill Opinion of the Age we now live in, I cannot look upon this Reflexion as just and well-grounded.

The true Occasion both of the Observation and the Complaints grounded upon it, I take to be that variety of Wickedness whereby the several Ages and Countries of the World have been distinguish'd from one another. For there have been as many different Methods and Fashions of sinning among Men as Forms of Government;

vernment; and as many Changes and Revolutions in *Vice* as in *Empire*. Some Periods of Time have been remarkable for open Cruelty, Rapine, and Oppression; others for Treachery, and private Revenge, and all the secret ways of Destruction; other Ages there have been, when Luxury and Riot, and all manner of extravagant Lust and Debauchery, were the publick reigning Vices; sometimes Profaneness and a publick Contempt of Religion have prevail'd, at other times Indifference, and a careless Neglect of all that's good; sometimes Hypocrisy and an open pretence to Piety and Vertue have been used for a Cover to a close and secret practice of all manner of Vice, and at other times Men have had the Impudence to defend the worst Actions by endeavouring to make them appear consistent with Religion.

These, and many more such like Differences, are observable in the History of former times; but the peculiar distinguishing Character of this Age is a publick Denial of Religion, and all the Obligations of it, with an Endeavour to disprove the Evidences brought for it, and to offer a more rational Scheme of Libertinism. 'Tis true indeed, this ought to be the Plea of all wicked Men that are resolved to continue in their Vices, and upon that account it may be justly wonder'd at that the number of Atheists
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and profeſt Libertines has not been much greater in former Ages than in this in which we pretend to juſter Views and ſtronger Proofs of Religion than they had heretofore: But 'tis plain, there never were more than there are now to whom thoſe Characters do truly belong, whatever ſofter Names they are pleaſed to diſtinguiſh themſelves by; and the reaſon of it I look upon to be this:

The Scriptures of the New Teſtament, which are generally in this part of the World believed to contain the Revelations of God, are ſo plain and particular, ſo full and expreſs in the Account they give of the Duties required of Men, and the future Rewards and Punishments appointed for them, according as they obſerve or neglect theſe Duties; and the World is ſo enlightened now by the great Improvements of Knowledge that have been lately made, eſpecially by a critical and exact Search into the Deſign and Meaning of the Sacred Writings, that 'tis impoſſible for Men of Senſe to reconcile a wicked debauch'd Life with thoſe Ideas of God and Religion they meet with in the Scriptures; and therefore they find themſelves obliged, in defence of their Vices, which they cannot perſwade themſelves to part with, to deny, not only Revelation, but all manner of Religion too; ſince, if there be any Religion

at all, they are forced to acknowledge the falsest and most rational Draught of it seems to be laid in the Writings of the New Testament.

This Method of reasoning is now found to have a stronger Influence in quieting the Conscience; and making a wicked Man satisfied with himself, than any Plea formerly used, because it has a greater shew of Fairness and Sincerity in it; 'tis so very reasonable and honourable a thing for a Man to act up to his Principles, that wicked Men are easily disposed to entertain a good Opinion of the Principles of Irreligion, because the constant Agreeableness of their Practice to them makes their Character consistent and all of a piece, and gives them a great Advantage both in point of Judgment and Honour over those who pretend to other Principles, and yet act just as they do.

But; whatever Preference may be due to these Men in a comparison of them with wicked Professors of Religion, and whatever Ease and Satisfaction it may afford them in a continued Course of Vice that their Judgment and Practice agree together, I think it may be made very evident that they have only found out a new Artifice to deceive themselves; and that all their Reasonings are not only
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The Preface.

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vain and groundless but directly opposite to the clearest Corruptions of Truth and Happiness Mankind is capable of.

This is the Design and the Pretence of the following Discourse; and, to render it more effectual for the checking and putting some stop to the reigning Corruption of this Age, it is so contrived as to bear with equal Force against all the Principles that can be made use of to support Irreligion.

I know very well, that the Folly and Unreasonableness of downright Atheism are so manifest, and the pernicious Consequences of no Religion at all so visible in themselves, and besides have been so justly and largely exposed already in many late Discourses, that no body will dare to own the Title or Character of Atheist, whatever his private Sentiments may be; and therefore I have endeavour'd to give such a Proof of Religion as will overthrow all the loose Principles and Objections now commonly made use of to evacuate the practical Force and Power of it; all which may properly be rank'd under the Style of Irreligion, if they will not be allowed to come under that of Atheism; which, as far as we are concern'd to know or do any thing in the World, I take to be much the same thing; as will be more fully made out in the Discourse it self.

'Tis

The Being of a God is not indeed openly and directly question'd, because the Theory of the Universe cannot be so easily and conveniently explained without some such Notion to which the Name of God may be given; but, if what some Philosophers vouchsafe to call by the Name of God be not an intelligent Being, or be not Governour of the World, or does not More particularly concern himself with the Actions of Men; 'tis all one to us whether there be any such Being as God or no; all Hypotheses concerning the Origin, Duration, and present state of the World are then alike, that is, they are all equally fit to entertain our Imaginations, and help us to be insensible of the Tediouſness of living; which, if those notions of God that I have laid down are not true, is all the Business we have to do here.

*But still it will be urged, that allowing that Notion of God which I have given, there are few, if any, that can properly be called Atheists, because the generality at least of those who are commonly thought to deserve that Name do profess to believe a God of all those Attributes I have ascribed to him, and to acknowledge that Men are under some Obligations of Religion; but, if we examine all their Principles together and consider the necessary Consequences of them, they are by Title and Profession only distinguish'd
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from Atheists, and not by any real Difference in their Faith: For the Religion of these Men is nothing else but a few honest Principles relating to Justice, Friendship, and Society, which are wholly owing to their Complexion or Education, and not to their Belief of a God; and the practical Influence even of these commonly reaches no farther than that particular Set of Men whose Company or Interests they are most engaged in, and is intirely bounded and regulated by their present Ease, Advantage, or Reputation, and not by any Future Prospects in another Life; and those of them who seem to allow some future State, when they come to explain themselves, make it such a one as Men need have very little regard for in this.

These are all the Principles which the generality of those who have lately insulted the Christian Faith do really believe and act upon; this is the sum both of their Faith and Practice, however they are pleased to magnify the Excellence and Perfection of natural Religion, and whatever regard they pretend to have for the clear and easy parts of the Christian Revelation.

By Religion therefore I would here be understood to mean that whole Scheme of Humane Duties we find delivered in the Writings of the New Testament, as recommended and enforced by such a future State as is there described; which

which may properly be call'd, with respect to the Author of it Christian Morality. 'Tis in this Sense and Extent of the Word that I have endeavour'd to establish the Certainty and Necessity of Religion; and 'tis plain, that the Arguments made use of for this purpose will fit no other Scheme but this, there being no other Draught or Model of Life to be conceived that would be capable of producing such a noble Scene of Happiness as I have shewn would be the certain effect of an universal Practice of the Christian Morality.

I have not descended to a particular Defence of several Duties commonly insisted upon as Principles of natural Religion, the Reasonableness and natural Obligation of which is questioned by some who are willing to lye under as few Restraints as they can: this I say is not done not only because it was necessary to give a general Idea of Religion first, and a particular Examination of the several Parts of it was too long a Task to come within that compass of Writing I was confin'd to; but because I am fully satisfy'd 'tis a truer and shorter way of reasoning to prove the Truth of the Christian Revelation, and that being thoroughly proved, to submit entirely to the Authority of it, and regulate all our false and imperfect Views of Religion by that most perfect plan which God himself

himself has given of it in the Scriptures.

'Tis for the same Reason I have made no farther inquiries into the Condition and Duration of our Future State, and the Nature of those Rewards and Punishments we are to expect hereafter, nor have pretended to explain the several Difficulties that occur in the Doctrine of Divine Providence, because a particular and Satisfactory Account of these things can be had no other way than from Revelation: and in general 'tis a sufficient Answer to all Objections that can be raised from hence, that there is a God; that there are Marks and Tokens of Wisdom in the whole Oeconomy and Course of the World; that Man is made and designed for Religion here while he lives, and for a future State after Death.

If any of these Principles hold, they all hold; and no particular Difficulties that do not evidently overthrow the whole Scheme, can have any force at all. If there be no future State there's no Religion; if there is no such thing as Religion there is no such thing as Wisdom or Design in the Frame and Constitution of Man, and if the Appearances of Wisdom here have no Reality under them, no other Parts of Nature can afford us greater, and consequently, we can have no proof of such a wise and intelligent Being

ing as God. In this Process of Reasoning we argue upon a full and comprehensive Knowledge of the Principles we argue from, because, if there be no future Life after this, we know the utmost that can be known of the State and Condition of Man: But the seeming Inequalities of Providence in the Conduct of the Universe can be no Argument against any of the Principles before advanced; because, while we have certain Tokens of Wisdom remaining, no doubtful Appearances of the contrary will be sufficient to overthrow them; and all those must needs be so where we cannot carry our Observations to the farthest end of things in all the different Points of distance from us; which is the present Case.

*For except we were able to take a full and exact View of the whole Universe, and all the Relations which the several parts of it bear to one another, 'tis impossible for us to know that such or such a thing was ill contrived in it; except we were sure there was no such thing as a future State, we cannot condemn the present Course of Humane Affairs as unequal or fortuitous; and except we were thoroughly acquainted with all the Circumstances of our Condition in another World, the just Proportion of future Rewards and Punishments to the Actions of this Life, and the exact Manner and Method of God's dealing with us hereafter, we can
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never make it appear from Reason that the Scripture-Account of God's future Appointments for us is contrary to the Rules of Justice or Wisdom, and consequently that our Expectation of a future State is vain, because the most probable Representation we can make of it, which is that we find in the New-Testament, is ill-grounded.

If therefore the General Proof of Religion hereafter given will stand good, no particular Difficulties either in the real Phenomena of Nature, or the arbitrary Schemes and Hypotheses of Men ought to have any weight with us. The next and only thing we are to do afterwards is, to search and examine into the Scriptures, and being convinc'd of their Truth, sincerely endeavour to form all our Opinions and Practice of Religion upon that most perfect Model of it there laid down.

The Problem

It is well known that the problem of the existence of a continuous function on a compact set is a problem of the first importance in the theory of functions. The problem is to show that if a function is continuous on a compact set, then it is bounded and attains its maximum and minimum values. The problem is to show that if a function is continuous on a compact set, then it is bounded and attains its maximum and minimum values.

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T H E
Certainty and Necessity
O F
R E L I G I O N

In General, &c.

H E B. xi. 6.

*He that cometh to God must believe that
he is, and that he is a Rewarder of
them that diligently seek him.*

Religion has been so long in Possession, so powerful have been its Influences, and so universal its Authority, so nearly is Mankind concern'd in all its promises or threat-

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ens, and such mighty Consequences attend the Truth or Falshood of its Pretensions, that I have often wonder'd how the Men of these latter days, who are at such a distance from the first Rise of things, durst dispute a Title so well owned and attest-ed; the Denial of which is so dangerous, and which, if it had at first been false, they have no possible means left of disproving; whereas on the contrary, the Evidences of its Truth are still in being, still fresh, and in all their strength of Conviction: as I hope in some measure to make good in the following Discourse.

I am very sensible I am engaged in a Subject, which several great and learned Men have already, and some of them very lately, treated of, with the wisest Reflections and justest Reasoning imaginable. But, besides that Truth it self is fruitful, and a Subject of this nature hardly ever to be exhausted, the same Object may admit of different Views, there may be new and more suitable ways of offering the same things to the Understanding, or old Arguments may be strengthen'd and sen'd in from the Objections that have been formerly rais'd against them by some additional Supports: or, if there should be no
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thing of all this in what I have to say, it may be sufficiently justified to the Adversaries I have to deal with, if the same things are repeated again to their Shame and Confusion, who have hitherto found nothing to answer to them, and are yet in their Sins and Unbelief.

But since it is not so much their Conviction, which nothing but unpromis'd irresistible Grace can effect, as the securing and confirming others in the Truth that I chiefly aim at; since the encreasing and propagating a true sense of Religion among Men is my principal Design, and not a learned Triumph over an Adversary, I have suited my Method accordingly, and consequently have made Choice of such a one which in the general Management is different, tho' in several parts of it, it must necessarily fall in with that of others.

The *Certainty* and *Necessity* of Religion, is what I undertake to prove, and therefore I shall consider Religion all together in the full Latitude and Extent of the Notion, and shall not insist wholly upon the Proof of a God as a *first Cause, Mover, or Eternal Being*, but so far only as the *Existence of God* is included in the *Idea of Religion*, and

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that in order to shew the *necessary Connexion* betwixt the *Being of God* and the *Obligations of Religion*: But since these Obligations result from the *Nature of Man*, as well as the *Being and Attributes of God*, and from the *Relation* the *one* stands in to the *other*, I shall chiefly make Choice of such Arguments, as, being taken from what we know of our selves, are best perceived by us, and entertain'd with the least Resistance or Suspicion.

All nice and philosophical Reasonings I shall forbear, as much as I can; but, where the Nature of the Subject, or the particular Prejudices of the Persons to be satisfied require a more speculative and metaphysical Proof of things, I shall chuse out such Arguments of this kind, as will give the Understanding the least difficulty to comprehend, and shall avoid all such, which tho' convincing to some that are already well used to Speculation, may chance to be suspected by others of too much Finess, and so will probably, tho' very unjustly, create in them a Disgust to all the rest. And I shall all along take a due care to distinguish betwixt such Notions and Opinions as are absolutely necessary to the *Being of Religion*, and those others, which,
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tho' oftentimes used in the Defence of it, and earnestly contended for, do not destroy what they were brought to prove if they should be false, nor so much as alter any thing in the *Nature* or *Obligations* of Religion.

Now in order to pursue my intended Method with the more Clearness, I think my self obliged in this place to give an account what I mean by *Religion*; a right Notion of which being first laid down, 'twill afterwards more easily and plainly appear, whether there be any such thing; and if there be, whether it is reasonable or necessary for Mankind to be influenced by it.

By Religion then, in general, I mean all that *Worship*, *Service*, or *Obedience*, we that call our selves *Men* are to pay to *God*; or whatever we are, in any respect, *obliged* to upon the Prospect of his Favour, or under the Penalty of his Displeasure in *this* or a *future State*. From whence 'tis plain, that in order to make it appear there is such a thing as Religion, we must prove that there is a God, or some superiour Being, who can, and does *oblige Man* to live after such a particular manner; and

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that Man is capable of, and actually under such an *Obligation*, the Performance or Neglect of which, will be attended with very different Consequences, and those sufficient to determine him to act one way rather than another.

But if a Man was desirous of convincing such Persons as denied all this, where should he first set out in his Proof? What Order should he give his Thoughts? Where must he take his Rise when he is to prove original Foundation-Truths? What Evidence will be powerful enough to prevail upon those who love a Lye, and hate to be reform'd? How are they to be attempted who are strongly fortified with their Prejudices, and have hardly left a Man that would attack them any Ground to stand upon? Such an unreasonable Defiance of the common Sense of Mankind, is justly thought by the Wisest Men to deserve no other Confutation but that of Punishment? However, since those who are yet innocent or indifferent may be corrupted, and those who are just entering upon the ways of Irreligion may be farther advanced and confirm'd in them by more settled *Atheists*, the same is to be done for the Security of those as should be applied

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to the Conviction of these, if they were judged capable of being convinc'd; and therefore the Method to be used upon this Occasion must be such as will surest destroy the Pretences of *Atheism*, as well as give the easiest Account and most undeniable Proofs of *Religion*; that so the Arguments made use of by the Perverters of Mankind may lose all their Power and Force upon others, by losing the Advantage of coming unanswer'd.

In order therefore to satisfy those who have not quite renounc'd their Reason of the Truth of Religion according as I have before described and stated it, and the Falshood of those Grounds upon which it is opposed, I shall proceed in this manner.

First, I shall give some Account of the *Nature of Man*, the *Nature of God*, and that *Relation* there is between them, so far as is necessary to establish the Notion of *Religion*.

Secondly, I shall prove that there *is a God*, or a Being of such a Nature as I before supposed.

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Thirdly, From the Knowledge I have shewn we have, or are capable of having, concerning the *Humane* and *Divine Natures*, I shall deduce a positive and direct Proof of *Religion*.

Fourthly, I shall farther evince the Truth of *Religion*, from a *Comparison* of it with *Irreligion*, and the necessary Consequences arising from thence.

Fifthly, I shall consider the *Grounds* and *Pretences* of *Irreligion*, what can be alledged in Defence of it, and what are the usual Pleas for it; and from thence shew the Absurdity and Folly of their Principles and Actions who have no better Reasons for what they Believe and Do, than those upon Examination will be found to be.

Sixthly, I shall make some Enquiries into the *Causes* of *Atheism* and *Irreligion*, or the Reasons that induce Men to take up such Opinions.

And conclude with a short Explication of the different Notions of *Atheism* and *Deism*.

I. First

I. First then, I am to give some Account of the *Nature of Man*, the *Nature of God*, and the *Relation* there is between them, so far as is necessary to establish the Notion of *Religion*.

The Knowledge of *Religion*, as of all other Things whatsoever, must begin from the Consideration of our Selves. Now our *Existence* being granted, the same Consciousness that satisfies us of this, if we carefully attend to what passes within us, will farther inform us, that we are capable of *Thinking*, *Perceiving*, and *Knowing*; which Capacity is usually stiled *Understanding*; and that we have a Power of *determining* our selves *to Think* and *not to Think*, or *Perceive* and *not Perceive* certain Objects or Ideas, and *to move* and *not to move* certain parts of our Body, and by that means other contiguous Bodies; as likewise a Power of *Acting* and *not Acting*, according to our own *Determination*: that is, we can actually entertain a Thought, or dismiss it; cause a Motion, or hinder it, when we have so *determin'd* with our selves, and that barely by *determining* so to do: which general Power of determining our Selves, and executing our own Determinations

tions or Commands, is call'd the *Will*, and includes all that is *active* within us. And upon further Reflexion we may find, that in several Instances we have an *equal* Power to determine our selves to Think or not to Think, to Move or not to Move, and in several Instances an *equal* Power to Act or not to Act according to such Determination; but in several others we can determine our selves but one way; and in some, where we can determine our selves either way, we can obey but one Determination: In the first Cases we act with *Liberty*, in the latter we are under a *Necessity*: But all our Actions, in all the several Instances before mention'd, are stiled *voluntary*, as proceeding immediately and effectually from our selves, only when the Acting or not Acting proceeds wholly from some extrin-sick Violence surmounting the Strength of our Bodies, which is properly call'd *Force* as distinguish'd from *Necessity*; the Effects of which cannot truly be said to be ours, but belong to those Beings who employed that Force upon us.

'Tis plain also from Experience, that we are capable of *Pleasure* and *Pain*, by which I mean all manner of agreeable and disagreeable Sentiments, whether caus'd
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by our selves, or occasion'd by any thing without us; that these are the first and only Springs of *Action* which set all our Powers a-work, and give Rise to all our Determinations, the obtaining the one and avoiding the other being the whole Employment of the Soul; and that there are some Things which we are naturally, by our very Frame and Make, pleas'd or displeas'd with, without being taught by one another to be so, and consequently, that we desire and do, are averse from and forbear several things in Compliance with these first original Sentiments: From whence it follows, that there is something antecedent to all manner of Action begun within our selves, which is the *Reason of it*, without which it had not been, which when taken away or ceasing, the Action ceases too, and there follows a *Rest, Acquiescence, or Satisfaction*. This *Reason* or *Motive* of Action is call'd an *End*; the Perception of which at a distance, or future, as such as would be, all things consider'd, more agreeable to the Mind when present, than any thing it feels now, is the Cause of all those Actions which are look'd upon as requisite for the Attainment of it. Now if this Representation be true, and the Actions

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ons proper and fit, a Man is said to act *wisely*, and for his true Interest and Advantage; but, when either of these Conditions is wanting, he acts *foolishly*, and to his Disadvantage.

But, since by the same Experience we are inform'd that we may, and often do, act foolishly, and to our own Prejudice, by lessening or discontinuing our present Satisfaction, or bringing more Pain and Trouble upon our selves than we already feel; and that the only Cause of this, is the different Representation of things future from what they are perceived to be when present, both in themselves, and in their Consequences and Dependances; we are from hence convinc'd that there is no other way of remedying this Evil, and preventing our being accessary to our own Misery, but by rectifying our Perceptions of Things, which, being future, do not by immediate Impressions assure us that they really are what they appear to us to be. And, if we strictly examine our selves about these Matters, we shall find that what we now actually feel or perceive we cannot possibly imagine to be otherwise than as we feel or perceive; that is, we must be undeceivably conscious of all our own *Sensations*

sations and Perceptions: But how we shall hereafter be *affected*, we can no otherwise know than by knowing the different Natures of the Things that are to *affect* or be *affected*, with the Connexion and Dependance of one thing upon another, in order to promote or hinder the one's being so *affected* by the other.

Now, as to the Knowledge we are capable of in this kind, we are to consider these farther Observations upon our selves: That there are some Ideas or Notions that appear with that Light and Clearness to our Understandings, that we immediately perceive them in all their Extent, and a necessary Agreement or Disagreement betwixt them, and afterwards the Dependance or Independance of others upon them; to the Truth of which Appearances we cannot possibly deny our Assent: That there are some Propositions which do not appear with such Evidence as to command our Assent, but have more to incline us to believe them true than false; and this according to different degrees: That there are others that appear with equal Motives of Credibility, which hold us in Suspence, and will hardly suffer us to determine either way: And a great many things we have no
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manner of Notions of at all, for the Truth or Falshood of which, nothing at all appears to us.

But, besides these general Differences in the Appearance of things as *certain, probable, doubtful, or exceeding our present Reach*, we are moreover to take notice of two other kinds of Difference; the one between the *real Nature* of Things and their *Appearances* to us, the other betwixt the Appearance of Things to us with respect to *Truth or Falshood*, and their Appearance to us with respect to *Action*, and the Consequences of it, *Happiness or Misery*. As to the first of these Differences, we find that what we are once really *certain* of, always appears *certain* to us; and what cannot appear to us but as *certain*, we cannot possibly conceive should be otherwise in its own Nature: But what is in its own Nature *certain*, may appear *doubtful* to us at one time, and *probable* at another; and what we assent to as *probable* now, may afterwards command our Assent as *certain*; and there are things, which, altho' we are not *certain* of their Truth or Falshood, we are *sure* we know as much as we can of, by the strength of our present Faculties. As to the other Difference in
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the Appearance of things, with respect to *Action* and its Consequences, it often so happens, that where the Truth of a Thing seems doubtful to us, it plainly appears to be *safer*, and more to our present Advantage, or affords a better Prospect of future Happiness to act one way than another: and abundance of Instances there are in which we find our selves under a *Necessity of Acting* one way or other where neither side appears certainly true, but one only probable, or both equally doubtful.

This is all the Account of Humane Nature which I thought necessary to my present Design of establishing the Truth of Religion: And I perswade my self, I have said nothing upon this Subject, which any Man, that fairly consults himself, can possibly call in question. But, if any Objections do lye against any part of what I have now laid down, they shall be considered before I make use of it as a Proof of any thing else.

All Questions concerning the *Origine* and *Substance* of the *Soul*, its *Union* with the *Body*, and *separate Existence*, I have purposely waved, as things which do in a great measure lye out of the Reach of *natural Reason*, and consequently admit of
no

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no *certain* Proof from *thence* ; are, as commonly handled, involved in great Ambiguity of Terms, and, which way soever explain'd, I think, as far as I have hitherto seen, make no manner of change, either as to the *Truth* or *Nature* of Religion. Whether the Soul be *infused* or *derived*, *material* or *immaterial*; whether it *depends* upon the *Body* in all its Actions, or sometimes *acts* of it *self*, is *dissolved* with it, or *exists* after it, if what I said before concerning our own Experience be true, it will be found that Religion has a very good bottom to stand upon, without being supported by any of these Opinions. But if the Soul came from *without* the *Body*, is of a *different Nature* from it, can *Act* independently of it, and *Exist* after its Dissolution, as there are several very *probable Reasons*, and a great deal of *certain Revelation* for, then are there so many additional Arguments for the Truth of what may be sufficiently prov'd without 'em, from plainer and more undeniable Principles; as I shall endeavour to make good in the following Discourse.

The next Thing I am to do, is to consider the *Nature of God*, or what that Notion

tion or Idea is to which I affix that Name: which in short is this; An *Eternal* Being of all *possible Perfections* in himself, and from whom every thing else deriv'd its Being, and whatever belongs to it.

But, to give a more particular Account of my Thoughts in this Matter, I conceive God to be *One unchangeable* Being, of an *intelligent Nature*, who *always necessarily Existed* of himself, who knows every thing that can be known, who can do every thing that is possible to be done, who does every thing he wills, and nothing but what he wills himself, who enjoys an unalterable State of the greatest Happiness that can be enjoy'd, who never wills or does any thing inconsistent with this State, who makes *himself* the ultimate end of all he does, and next to that the Good or Happiness of all such Beings as are capable of it; which together with all other Beings, and every thing that belongs to them, were from him, and depend upon him for their Continuance; and lastly, who brings about whatever he wills or designs by the fittest and most proper Means.

This seems to me to be the easiest Notion of God we are capable of conceiving;

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ving; and if it can be proved that there really is such a Being as is here describ'd, I think 'tis all that's necessary upon this Subject, with respect to what I have undertaken: For whether we represent God to our Thoughts as a *pure and simple act*, a *spiritual Substance*, or *subtle Matter*; as the *whole mass or Substance of the World* taken all together, or as the *Soul and active Principle of it*; as *confined to the Heavens*, or *diffused through the whole extent of Being*; as the *Maker and Creator of all things*, or as the *Principle and Fountain* from whence they flowed; or consider him under any other Idea our Reason or Imagination can frame; if we allow all the Characters of a Deity before mentioned, 'tis the same thing, as to Religion, which soever of these Opinions we embrace, as will hereafter appear: But, if any of them are urged to overthrow that Notion of a Deity I have given, the Proof of such a Being to which that Notion belongs will be a full and sufficient Answer to them.

Now as to the *Relation* there is betwixt *God and Man*, we thus conceive; That God is our *Creator and Parent*, the *Author* of our Being and Nature, and all the Powers and Capacities of it, and that we are
his

his *Creatures*, the *Issue* of his Power, and the *Workmanship* of his Hands; that God is our *Protector*, *Governor*, and *Master*, and we are his *Dependants*, *Subjects*, and *Servants*; that God is our *Benefactor* and *Author* of all our Happiness, and we *obliged* and *indebted* to him for whatever we enjoy. All which Relations do necessarily result from the Natures of the Being related, as will plainly appear upon a just Comparison of them together, and will be farther manifested when we enter upon the particular Proofs of Religion.

Supposing therefore that I have given a true Account of the *Nature of Man*, which being taken from Experience, can admit of no other Proof, nor no greater Certainty; the only thing remaining to be done, before I come to the main Argument I propos'd, is to prove,

II. That *there is a God*, or a Being of such a Nature as I have endeavour'd to represent; which is the second Thing I undertook.

In discoursing of which Subject, that I may express my Thoughts with the more

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Clearness, give every Argument its due weight, and everywhere proportion my Building to my Foundation, I shall consider the Being of God under the different Degrees of *Possible*, *Probable*, and *Certain*.

First then, As to the *Possibility* of such a Being, I cannot imagine any Man of such an irregular Make of Understanding, as to apprehend that Description I have given of a Deity to be *absurd* and *chimerical*, or to have any *Inconsistency* or *Contradiction* in it. I am sure I have said nothing but what I very well conceive my self, and I think is as easily conceivable by any Body else; and I have used the plainest and most intelligible Expressions I could upon this Occasion.

But, farther to assist the Weakness of our Understandings in framing a more distinct Conception of God, we will consider the several Idea's of which this complex Notion is made, and see whether they will not suit very well together.

Now 'tis plain to any Man that reflects upon the Ideas he has in his Mind, that he has a Notion of *Time*, and the several *Periods* of it, which he can place at what distance he pleases to measure the *Durati-*

on of any thing by, but never at such a distance by all the Addition his Imagination is capable of, but that he can still suppose some Being to exist both *before* and *after*; which Being, before and after which he cannot conceive any Time or other Being, he calls *Eternal*.

In like manner, when we consider the *Variety of Beings* in the World, with their several *Modes* and *Relations*, we are not able to imagine or suppose such a number of any of them that there cannot still be a greater; and this *possible Variety* of Things never to be exhausted is stiled *Infinite*. And if we can conceive such an *Infinity of Things possible*, we can conceive a *Power* proportionable that can produce whatever is possible to be produced, and a *Knowledge* answerable to that which can know whatever can be known, and that is whatever can be.

Thus it is we conceive an *eternal intelligent Being* of *infinite Knowledge* and *Power*.

And this we do very easily without such Intenseness of Thought, and nice *Abstraction*, as People are apt to imagine; for we find *Infinity* almost in every Thing: All our Studies and Enquiries lead us to this Notion.

When we consider the *Extent* or *Dimensions* of *Matter*, we lessen and magnify them

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them till we are lost either way, and still find our selves as far from any Bounds as when we first set out upon the Search : When we run our Thoughts over the *Variety* of *natural Bodies* in the World, the more Differences we observe, the more we comprehend possible, each new Difference taken notice of, affording an inconceivable Variety of Combinations with those observ'd before.

'Tis the same thing if we contract our View, and keep within the Compass of *one Kind* or *Division* of Bodies only, as *Plants*, *Minerals*, and the like, the farther we advance our Observations, the more still do the *Species* or *Sorts* multiply upon us, and the *possible* Variety of more does proportionably encrease, till confounded with the growing Prospect, we are content to admire what we tried in vain to reach.

'Tis thus also in the *intellectual Nature*. The *different Degrees* of *Knowledge*, *Power*, and *Happiness*, we are conscious of, do sufficiently assure us, that we are capable of greater and greater still ; and, whatever Notion we can frame of our own State with respect to any of these Qualifications, from the utmost top of what we are arrived to, we can look farther still, and conceive
higher

higher Advancements of each kind possible in our selves, in other Men, or at least in other Beings of larger Capacities; and this in a continual Rise, without any thing to terminate our View.

From whence we are farther enabled to conceive, that God is *infinitely happy* as well as *infinitely knowing* and *powerful*; that is, that he enjoys all the Happiness that can possibly be enjoyed by any Capacity of being.

Having got thus far over the Notion of a Deity, I think, we may with less Difficulty conceive, that such a Being as this did necessarily exist of himself; that is, that an eternal Being had nothing before it to be the Cause or Author of its Existence; And farther, that he is *unchangeable* or *always the same*; that is, that an eternal Being always is, and a Being of infinite Knowledge, Power, and Happiness, is always alike, knowing, powerful, and happy. The actual Production of all things, which are not God, from him, and their Dependance upon him for their Continuance, and all other Circumstances of their being, are no hard Things to be conceived by those that acknowledge he can do all things possible; and he that knows every thing that can be known,

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may as easily be supposed to effect whatever he designs by the fittest and most proper means, and that is to be *infinitely wise*: And what other *Reason* or *Motive* can we frame for an intelligent Being of infinite Happiness to *act* upon, but *his own free Pleasure*? And who can hinder the Almighty from doing what *he will*? But that the *Happiness* of all such Beings as are capable of it, so far as it is consistent with his *Wisdom* to grant them the Enjoyment, should be very agreeable to his *Good Will* and Pleasure, we are not, I believe, disposed to doubt.

And this compleats the Account I have before given of the *Nature* of God in short, and have now examined over again more particularly.

From all which, I think, I may safely conclude, that the *Idea* we have form'd of a God is no *Chimera* or *extravagant work of the Imagination*, but a very *possible consistent Notion*; and that those who affirm there is some such *Being* to which this *Idea* belongs, cannot be censured for vain incoherent Thinkers, who have put things together without any ground or warrant from Reason.

How far the *bare Conception* of such an *Idea* as that we have framed of God, or the

the *meer Possibility* of such a Being, does, without the Assistance of other Principles, prove the *Reality* of his *Existence*, I shall not here examine. The Arguments drawn from hence, tho' in themselves perhaps *certain*, to several Persons *convincing*, and not to be *disproved* by any, do not fit every Understanding, nor have that regular uniform Face of Truth which takes at first sight as well as pleases after farther Examination: only thus much I shall alledge in their Defence, that the greatest and commonest Objection made against this kind of Proof is very ill grounded.

For 'tis usually urg'd, that Arguments drawn from the *Idea* or *Possibility* of a God, are of no force in this *particular Case*; because they do not *universally* conclude. It cannot be said that *whatever* is *possible*, or we have an *Idea* of, for that Reason *actually* is, and therefore 'tis thought that the *actual Existence* of a God does by no means follow from the *Possibility* or *Conception* of such a Being; whereas the Conclusion may hold in this Case, and no other whatsoever: for *Conception* supposes *Possibility*, and *Possibility* a *Correspondent Power*; and a *Power of Existing*, when applied to such a Being as God, must necessarily infer *Actual*

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al Existence; as might be farther made out if there was occasion for it: but, because the unusual Niceness of the Proof may probably raise some Prejudice against it, I shall wave the Prosecution of it; and to cut off all Colour of Advantage from such as are disposed to cavil, I shall content my self at present with having shewn that 'tis *very probable and conceivable*, that there *may be a God*, and pass on to the next Enquiry I am to make, whether it is not *very probable* that there *is one*.

A *common* Argument for the Being of a God, (and 'tis never the worse for being common) is the *general Concurrence and Agreement of Mankind* in the Acknowledgment of this great Truth. We will consider the Argument it self in its full Strength, and then see what fairly follows from it.

The Sum of what may be said upon the first is this: That all Accounts and Relations of the *present* State of the World, and all the Histories of *past* Ages that are now extant do agree to assure us, that, since the first Memory of Things was preserved till now, there was no period of Time, nor any Nation under the Sun, in which the Being of a God was not acknowledg'd and
believed

believed by a vast Generality of all that were then and there living.

And farther, that not only the greatest part of *Mankind* taken in gross, nor the greatest part of every *Nation* considered as a distinct Society of Men, were of this Belief, but the greatest part of every *Self* or *Division*, as they stand distinguish'd by their different *Opinions* in other things, their different *Capacities*, *Interests*, *Ways*, and *Manners of Thinking*; as, the *Learned* and *Ignorant*; those that had examined the Point, and consider'd the Reasons for and against it; and those who had only had it proposed to them, without any proof either way but what was immediately offer'd from the nature of the thing; the *Mahometan* and *Idolater* who add absurd things to the Nature of God, as well as the *Jew* and *Christian* who think more consistently of him; those that hold the *World to be Eternal*, or made by *Chance*, as well as those who look upon it as the *Effect of Wisdom*; those that explain the Works of Nature by *Mechanical Powers*, and those that in their Account of the System of Things make use of *Intelligences* and *abstracted Notions*: not only the *Religious* and *Superstitious*, and such as expect any good
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or ill Consequences should attend their Belief of a God, but those whose other Opinions declare they have nothing at all, or very little, to hope or fear from a God, as the *Epicurean*, the *Sadducee*, the *Hobbist*, and the *Deist*: and lastly, all sorts of *wicked Men* who are uneasy under the Thoughts of a God, and endeavour to shake them off.

Those few that in different Ages of the World have opposed the common Belief, have had no Followers, and several of them at the Seasons of greatest Seriousness and Recollection have renounc'd the Opinions they maintain'd at looser hours: so *universally* has the Opinion of a God obtained among Men.

From whence I think I may fairly infer thus much at least, That such a Perswasion as this is very *suitable* to the *Understanding*, and agrees very well with all the *Principles of our Knowledge*; and therefore, tho' it could not be *certainly* proved to *follow* from those *evident Perceptions* we have of *other Truths*, yet being readily entertained by our Reason, without any Opposition from them, it must upon this Account only be *extreamly probable* and fit to be believed.

For

For suppose it to be an *Error*, what can we assign for the Cause of such an *universal Error*?

'Tis possible indeed, that the *Generality of Mankind* may be *deceiv'd* in a Judgment founded upon the Reports of *Sense* or *Imagination*; they may believe that the Sun is very near of the same bulk in which it appears to the Eye, when 'tis so many times bigger than the Earth; or, that it moves when it stands still; or, if they do not believe Wrong in either of these Points, there may be something else of such a Nature supposed, in which all Mankind may be mistaken, as most of the Learned think the rest of the World are in both these Judgments. But the *Notion* and *Existence* of a God are Matters of *pure Thought* and *Reason*, in the Conception of which, *Sense* and *Imagination* have no share; and therefore they can never owe their Original to *them*.

'Tis true, the Mind, by the Help of *these Faculties*, may make a great many *false Representations* of the *Deity*, and consequently occasion a great Variety of *Errors* concerning him; but it cannot be inferr'd from hence, that therefore *those Notions* and *Opinions* of a God in which all Men agree proceed from the same Fountain as *these*

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these additional Errors do, in which *they differ* so very much, and that consequently, in their own nature, *those* may be as much Errors as *these other* are, tho' they are not yet discovered to be so.

The contrary, I think, is very plain: For the *Difference* of the *Representation* in this latter Case proves an *Incapacity* in the *Faculties* to perceive the Objects they were employed about; whereas in the other Supposition, the *Constancy* and *Universality* of the Perception is an Argument both of the *Suitableness* and *Truth* of the Matter perceived.

There's nothing in the *Idea* of God, as I have endeavoured to describe it, that falls under the Cognizance of our *Senses*, nor is any Man conscious to himself that he has perceiv'd God at any time *this way*; and therefore all *sensible Ideas* applied to him must be as wild and extravagant as the Ideas of blind Men concerning Colours, or at least of those of any other Men concerning the Inhabitants of Planets and ethereal Regions, because there is no manner of Resemblance betwixt the *Ideas* of *one Faculty* and those of *another*, nor any discoverable betwixt a *new Idea* and those we perceive already: so that if we should endeavour to represent

represent a *pure Idea*, which is the Object of *Reflexion* only, by *sensible Images*, no wonder if the *Representation* be very *different*, when all the Ideas of Sense have an equal Pretence to be *Representatives*, no one being liker the Original it stands for than another: And the same may be said with respect to a *new unknown Idea*; for, whatever it be in its *own Nature*, and whatever Resemblance there be betwixt that and *any other* we have already perceived, out of our whole Stock of Ideas we have no more reason to chuse *one* than *another* to represent it by; and consequently, *different Men* must represent it to themselves *very differently*: From whence it plainly appears, that if the *Notion* of God be *purely intellectual*, or if there be something *sensible* in it, and we are not conscious to our selves that we have actually perceiv'd it, as 'tis plain we are not, the *sensible Representations* of him must be very *various*, and therefore very *false*: But when all Men think alike concerning Objects not perceivable by *Sense*, 'tis not only a *certain Sign* that their Ideas are *suitable* and *proportionate* to the *Faculty* that perceives them, but 'tis very *probable* also they are *truly sorted* and put together.

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Where-ever there is a *general Agreement* in the *Perception*, there is certainly an *Uniformity* in the *Appearance*, which is as necessary to make an *universal Error* as an *universal Truth*; and therefore, supposing all Men mistaken about the *Bulk* or *Motion* of the Sun, it necessarily follows from hence, that whatever *appears* to the *Sense* in this Case *appears* the *same* to all Men; so that the *Errors* occasion'd by this means are not in the *Sense*, but belong to *another Faculty*; nor are they either *necessary* or *invincible*, not *necessary*, because we need not have made any Judgment at all concerning these *Appearances* offered to our *Sense*, several Requisites to a *just Sensation* being wanting, without which, we know, we cannot judge with Assurance; not *invincible*, because our Opinions concerning these things may be afterwards altered and corrected by *Reason*; which, being a Faculty superior to *Sense*, may preserve us from the Illusions of it.

But when all Men agree in Matters of *pure Reflexion* and *Reason*, we have all the Assurance we can have, that they are in the right. For whence should any *Error* proceed? 'Tis certain the *Appearance* must in this Supposition be *uniform*, and the *Faculty* employed

employed about its *proper Object*. Besides, if there be a *Clearness* in the *Appearance*, the *Understanding necessarily* closes with it, and if in such a case it should be deceived, there is no *higher Faculty* to correct the Mistake: How then can we imagine the Minds of Men to be so disposed as to be under a *Necessity* of being *deceiv'd*, as they must be if a *constant universal Appearance* of *Truth* should be only the *Veil of Falshood*: For how can any Man help believing that to be true which always appears so to *him*, and concerning which he can receive no other Information from *himself* or *any body else*?

But here perhaps it may be said, where the *Evidence* is not so strong as to *command* our *Assent*, *Error* may wear the Face of *Truth*, tho' we have not yet been able to discover the Cheat; and therefore 'tis our own Fault if we are deceived in *this* as well as in the *other Instances* of *Sense*, since we are not under a *necessity* of giving our Judgments according to the *Appearance*. To which I answer, that allowing a *bare Possibility* of *erring* in the present Case, all that I design'd to prove from this Argument of *General Consent* holds good still; which is, that because all People have agreed to ac-
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knowledge

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knowledge a God, 'tis therefore *very probable* there should be one. and *very agreeable* to the *Reason of Mankind* to believe so; so that altho' a Man is not from hence *fully convinc'd* of the *Certainty* of it, he cannot help believing 'tis a *very reasonable Opinion*, and that there's *very great likelihood* 'tis built upon *sure Foundations*, tho' he has not yet search'd so far as to discover them: For he cannot give an Account how all Men should come to be mistaken in a *matter of this Nature*; and, if they were, how they could ever be undeceived: which may be done in all the Instances of *Sense* or *Imagination* in which any *Error* can be judg'd *possible*.

All that can be farther supposed to countenance a Suspicion, is, that possibly there was a time when Men believed *otherwise*, but some People having started such an Opinion, and drest it up very plausibly, it took mightily in the World, and so was handed down from one to the other, and in succeeding Generations spread and prevail'd, till it became *universal*. But there is no manner of ground for such a *Supposition*:

I. Because, let us look as far back as we can, there are no *Marks* or *Footsteps* to be

be found of the *Rise* and *Original* of this Opinion, no *gradual Propagation* of it discoverable, it being in *every Age* we have any account of, as *universally* believed as it is *now*.

2. Because no *parallel Instance* can be assigned which might give any colour for a suspicion in *this*, no Persuasion of the like nature having ever been detected to be an *Error* after so long and so wide an Establishment.

I do not know of any Opinion whatsoever that *actually* obtained so *universal* a *Belief* as that of a God, and afterwards was proved to be false; and 'tis very difficult to imagine how such a thing should come to pass: however I can conceive and allow it to be possible, that a mistaken *matter of fact* or a *conjectural Hypothesis* of something belonging to *natural Knowledge*, may, at some distance of time from its first appearance in the World, be pretty generally believed as certain, and afterwards by a *Discovery* of *fresh Circumstances* in the *one*, or making *new Observations* about the *other*, a great part of Mankind may come to be of another Opinion, of the Truth of which they may be *much surer*: but these are things of a *very different Nature* from that

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we are discoursing upon, and an *Error* in either of these cannot prove the *Possibility* of a *Mistake* in the *Case* in question. For, besides that a *distant matter of fact*, and a *natural Hypothesis* of something out of the present Reach of our Senses are hardly ever known to the greatest part of Mankind taken in general, and therefore a *general Belief* of them can respect only the *Learned*, whereas the *Being* of a *God* has in every *Age* been *actually* and *expressly* believed by the *generality* of all sorts of Men; besides all this I say, the *Notion* and *Existence* of a *God*, being Matters of *Reason* and *Reflection* only, do not depend upon any such *particular Circumstances* of *Time* or *Place*, or other *external Helps* and *Instruments* of *Knowledge* as are the peculiar Privileges of a *few*, to whom the rest of the World must be beholding for all they know concerning several Truths, as is plain in the Cases before mention'd.

All the *Observations of Sense*, upon which the Belief of a *God* is founded, lie open to every man, and are the same now they ever were; and the *Inferences* drawn from them are *very easie*, and within the reach of *common Capacities*. If some have refined upon them, and carried their Reasonings
much

much farther than others, it has been only to satisfy the *unwarrantable Scruples* and *Suspensions* of a few Pretenders to Learning, who make use of that little Knowledge they have to argue themselves out of all. But the *Generality* of Mankind, both *Learned* and *Ignorant*, have so firmly believed upon the *first plain obvious* grounds of Assent, as not to require or stand in need of farther Satisfaction; and therefore their *Faith* cannot be owing to the *plausible Colours* or *specious Reasonings* of any *first Inventors* of false Notions and Opinions.

But, after all, allowing the Supposition to be true, tho' I think it impossible that it should, that there was a time in which God was *no where* acknowledged in the World; whoever *invented* the *Notion*, whatever were the *Motives* it was *first* invented upon, or the *Arguments* upon which it was *first* believed, the *Propagation* of it afterwards, and the *Constancy* and *Universality* of the Belief *ever since*, must be owing to the *Agreeableness* of such an Opinion to the *common Reason* of Mankind, and all their other Knowledge, and to the *Strength* and *Sufficiency* of those *Reasons* upon which it is *now*, and has been *so long* received. For all the *first Motives* and *Arguments*, if they

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were any other than what *we* have now, and which have been the same in all Ages we have any Knowledge of left, have been all lost, and consequently their Influence spent, long ago; neither in any of the ancient Discourses *yet extant* concerning the *Being of a God*, is there any Appeal made to *Authority or Antiquity*; as if Men were obliged to believe this Truth because it was so antient, or because such and such eminent Persons had first recommended or enjoined the Belief of it: But all the Arguments made use of are wholly built upon the *Reason of the thing*, which is always the same; the same plain Reasons for the Being of a God have always had the same Influence, which, upon Examination, will be found to have no Art or Sophistry in them, and every body may examine them that will.

Nothing then remains, but to enquire into the Force and Validity of those Reasons upon which our *Belief of a God* is originally founded.

I suppose it now but a *probable Perswasion*, arising from that Readiness and Assurance of Assent with which we embraced this Truth, and yielded to the *first obvious*
Proofs

Proofs of it, upon a bare Proposal of them to the Understanding; in which Perswasion we are very much confirm'd by knowing that all *Mankind* have constantly agreed with us in it, being fully satisfied from hence, that no *peculiar Temper of Mind* or *Scheme of Thoughts*, no *private Interest* or *national Byass*, has disposed us to make a wrong Judgment, but something *common* to the *whole humane Nature*.

This is all the ground the *Generality of the World* believe upon; and tho' to a nice Examiner of things it is not *certain irresistible Conviction*, yet 'tis sufficient to justify a full and entire Assent, and to warrant our acting according to it. For to suspect a thing to be false, and act as if it were so, upon a bare Possibility imaginable that it may be so; or rather, because we have not received the *highest degree* of Proof the thing is, in its own Nature, capable of, when, at the same time, we have no manner of Reason to distrust what we have; can be neither *rational, prudent, nor safe*.

However, Since there are Persons whose *Actions* and at least *pretended Opinions* come up to this Character, we will consider the *common Proofs* of a Deity more closely and thoroughly, and see if what upon the first

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View appears so *probable*, and makes so strong an Impression upon the Mind, may not, upon farther Examination, strike us with that *Certainty* and *Evidence* that we cannot resist; without questioning all our other Knowledge, and disclaiming all manner of Distinction betwixt Truth and Falshood: which is,

III. The Third Consideration I proposed in treating of this Argument: Whether it is not *only* a *possible* or *probable* Opinion that there should be a God, but a *certain* and *infallible Truth* that there is one.

All the *common natural* Arguments and Reasons upon which the general Belief of a God is founded, are taken from the *visible frame of things* called the *World*, and those several *parts* of it which fall under every man's Notice and Observation; upon a slight Survey of which, any man that is in the least capable of Reflexion, where-ever his Thoughts light, will *perceive* or imagine that he perceives plain Marks and Tokens of *Power* and *Wisdom*, much of the same kind, tho' in proportion far greater than he has observ'd in any of the most wonderful Effects of *humane Skill* and
Strength;

Strength; the immediate Result of which, I believe, would be this Conclusion, That certainly there is *some Being*, exceedingly more powerful and knowing than *Man*, who was the *Author and Contriver* of this stupendous Fabrick.

And, if *Admiration* and *Curiosity* invite him to farther Enquiries, as 'tis difficult to suppose they should not, the *Compass* and *Extent* of the whole Work, the *Variety* of Objects in it, the *Constancy* and *Uniformity* of some Appearances, and *regular Changes* and *Revolutions* of other, the *Connexion* and *Dependance* of the several parts, the *Union* and *Confederacy* of multitudes of different kinds towards some common Production, and the *various particular Ends* and *Uses* of things, all *assistent* to one another, and *subservient* to some *general Design*; all these, I say, well consider'd and weigh'd together, would strengthen and confirm his former Judgments, and farther dispose him to conclude, That the *Author* of all these Instances of Power is *able* to do whatever else can be conceived *possible*, nothing else conceivable seeming more difficult to this Inquirer than what he sees already done; That a Being of so much Knowledge as his Works declare him, so vastly exceeding *Man's*, is
able

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able to do Things which are far above *Man's* Reach and Comprehension to conceive at all; And that he who has so wisely order'd and disposed every thing he has made to such proper Ends, has exercised his *Power* so far and no farther, because it was most agreeable to his *Wisdom* so to do.

There's nothing, I think, in all this, but what is easie and natural, and what may very well be imagin'd to be found out without the help of much Learning or an extraordinary Talent of Reflexion; and yet this is what has constantly, in all Ages, satisfied both the *Learned* and the *Thoughtful*, and stood the Test of *Time*, and *Sophistry*, and *Malice*.

But suppose some extravagant Thinkers, entirely under the Government of their *Senses* and *Lusts*, because they were not by when the World was made, and do not see the Hand which supports the Frame, and moves all the several Wheels of it, should therefore distrust all their Reasonings of this kind, and doubt the Being of a God notwithstanding the *Testimony of Nature*; is there no certain Proof to be given that *They* are not mistaken who believe a God upon these Grounds? Several have
already

already shewn there is, and this is what I shall at present endeavour to make good in the clearest and most unexceptionable manner I can.

But, before I enter upon this Argument, I think it necessary to enquire what *Certainty* is, that we may know what *kind* or *degree* of Proof may be properly and truly called *Certain*, and what not.

Now *Certainty* or *Evidence* (which I shall all along take in the same Sense) considered in the *Things* or *Ideas* which are the Objects of our Understanding, is a *necessary Agreement* or *Disagreement* of one part of our Knowledge with another; as applied to the *Mind*, 'tis the *Perception* of such Agreement or Disagreement, or such a *firm well-grounded Assent* as excludes not only all manner of *doubt*, but all *conceivable possibility of a Mistake*: And thus I suppose, and take it for granted, that we are *certain* of all our own *Perceptions* and *Sensations*, whatever we feel or are conscious to our selves of; and that we are fully and undeceivably assured of a great many of our *Judgments* founded upon the just and well-regulated Reports of our *external Senses*, to the same *degree* as we are of the Agree-
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ment and Disagreement of any *pure intellectual Ideas*.

Except this be allowed, we have no *Principles* to reason from, nor indeed any *Knowledge* at all, not so much as *Scepticism*; but universal *Darkness* and *Confusion* cover humane *Nature*: But he that grants thus much, and is true to his own *Reason*, must acknowledge *there is a God*; as will appear from the following *Considerations*.

Being then, as I suppose, by an *infallible Consciousness*, satisfied of our own *Operations* and *Existence*, and, by a *passive Perception* of various kinds and sorts of *Impressions* by the help of certain *Organs* of the *Body*, fully convinced of the *reality* of things without us, of *different Natures* or *Manners* of *Existence*, upon a farther Exercise of our *active Powers*, and Application of our *Senses* to external *Objects*, and then reviewing and reasoning over the *Observations* that result from thence, we come to these *certain Conclusions*:

That there are a great many *Changes* in the *World*; That a great many *new Appearances* present themselves, which before were no where to be found, some of which are observed to *disappear* again, as *others* likewise are, the *rise* and *original* of which

we

we never knew; That under all these *Changes and Varieties of Appearance*, there is something which is *constantly the same* which we call *Matter* or *solid extended Substance*; That the *different Appearances* our Senses inform us of in *Matter*, proceed immediately from the Differences of *Bulk* or *Number*, *Figure*, *Motion*, and *Rest*; That we are *conscious* of several things in our selves, which we perceive as *different* from all *these*; That we were not *always* thus conscious, but that there was a time when this *Consciousness*, and all that we perceive in our selves as *distinct* from *Matter*, which we call *Mind* or *Spirit*, was *joined* and *united* to a certain portion of *Matter*, or Collection of *material Particles* called *humane Body*; That, when this humane Body *changes* its *Appearance*, and such a particular *Union* of the parts of it is *dissolved*, then that *Consciousness*, and all those *internal Operations* which are now the *Object* of it, *cease* to be joined with that *Matter* they were just before *united* to.

Being well assured of the Truth of all these *Conclusions*, we are from thence immediately led to these following *Enquiries*.

How comes all this about? How came there to be such a thing as Matter? When
and

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and by *what means* did it exist? What is the *Cause* of all those *Changes* that are continually making in it? And why does it exist after so many *different manners*? Whence are we our selves? What was it that gave us such *conscious Beings*? How are they united to *Matter*? What *limits* the Continuance, and afterward *dissolves* the Bond of this wonderful *Union*?

Now in pursuance of these Enquiries, we find it utterly *inconceivable* and *impossible* that any thing should *make it self*; that a *Being* which once did not exist should *begin* to be of *it self*, by the force of its own Nature or Power, without the Assistance of *some other Being* which existed before it: From whence we are *irresistibly* convinc'd that something must be *eternal*, otherwise nothing could ever have been; for if any Time can be supposed in which *nothing* did exist, *nothing* would ever have existed at all, unless a Being that once *was not* could put *it self* into Being; but that is *impossible*, and 'tis certain something *now* really is, therefore something must be *eternal*.

And as from hence 'tis evident that something must be *eternal*, so 'tis plain from the *several Changes* we observe in the World,
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the Succession of *new conscious Beings*, and *different Dispositions of Matter*, that *every thing* is not so; now, if something be eternal, and a great many things are not eternal, then it plainly follows, that every thing that is *not eternal* was *made* by that which is; (*i. e.*) *originally* received its *Being*, and whatever belongs to it, from an *eternal Author or Cause*: otherwise, either something must be supposed to have *made it self*, which before is proved to be *impossible*, or *one temporary Being* must make *another*, which it cannot do but by the Force and Efficacy of *such Powers* which together with its *Existence* it *received* from some *other Being*, and so on till we come to the *eternal Fountain of all Power and Being*.

The only Question then is, *What is eternal?* for upon this depends the Resolution of all our other Doubts and Enquiries: For the better and more certain Satisfaction in which, I shall

First, Consider all the *Claims and Pretensions* made to this glorious Prerogative of *eternal Existence*:

Afterwards, I shall examine what those *Attributes* are that must *necessarily* belong to an *eternal Being*:

And

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And then shew that *that Being* to which all *these Attributes* agree, is what we call *God*, and there is *no other Being* that *is* or *can be* invested with the *like Characters*.

1. First then, As to the *Claims* and *Pretensions* to *eternal Existence*, these, I think, are all the *Suppositions* that can be made; either that *Matter alone* is eternal, or that the *only eternal Being* is what we call *Mind* and *Spirit*, or that *Mind* and *Matter* are *both* eternal.

But *Matter alone* or *co-eternal with Mind*, may be considered under several *different Respects*: for either we imagine it as having been from all Eternity rolled up in *one entire solid Mass*, without any *Distinction* or *Motion* of its parts, or as *loose*, and *divided* into innumerable little *Particles*, all in *constant Agitation* or *Motion*; out of which *quiet Mass* or *moving Atoms* the *present frame of things* was in time struck out and *form'd*: or else we must suppose that the *World*, as it *now* is, has *eternally* existed under the *same Form* as to the *principal parts* of its *Structure*, with a *constant Succession* of several of the *chief Species* or *sorts* of things in it.

There's

There's nothing else *imaginable* but an *eternal Succession* of new *Worlds* and new *Species* of Beings in them; which is an Opinion too extravagantly absurd to be owned by any body: For in this Hypothesis every new World must *make it self*, otherwise they are only new *Forms* which all owe their *Production* to some *common Principle* which is *eternally the same*, and then the Hypothesis falls in with some other before mention'd.

2. But which of those has *Truth* and *Certainty* of its side, is the next thing to be enquired into; and the Matter will best be determin'd by considering the *necessary Attributes* and *Characters* of an *eternal Being*.

It has been proved already, that all *Beings* which exist *in Time* must be *made* by something that was *eternal*, because it was *impossible* they should have existed any *other way*: The same will now appear *à priori* from the *Nature* of an *eternal Being*, the *inseparable Characters* of which are *necessary Existence* and all *possible Perfection*; which are *both* included in the *Notion* of an *eternal Being*, and both evidently infer one another: so that an *eternal Being* must exist

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necessarily, and have all possible Perfection; and whatever exists necessarily must have all possible Perfection; and whatever has all possible Perfection must exist necessarily.

An eternal Being must *exist necessarily* because it exists *of it self*, by the *nature* of its *own* Being; for it *always was* what it is, it *always* had the *same Nature* it has, and therefore there *always* was the *same Reason*, which is the *same necessity* for its existing; which may farther be proved thus:

That Being is said to *exist necessarily* which *not to have existed* we conceive utterly *impossible*, but 'tis utterly impossible that what we allow to be an *eternal Being* might *not have existed*: For then we must suppose some *Power* sufficient to *hinder* its Existence, which we cannot do without allowing the Existence of *some other* eternal Being by whose *free Power* *This* exists to which we deny a *necessity of Existence*; but then what we take from the *one* must be granted to the *other*, and there must be some *original* eternal Being which *always necessarily existed*: and this is sufficient to my present purpose, tho' I think it may be proved also, that there can be no *eternal Derivations* or *Emanations* from *this Fountain* but must have the *same necessity* of Existence as the
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original Being from whence they flow.

The other necessary Character of an eternal Being is, that it has *all possible Perfection*; that is, that there is nothing *conceivable* or in the Nature of things *possible*, which added to it would give it any *Advantage*, or in any sense render it *more perfect* than it is.

This is a plain and certain Consequence of its necessary Existence; for if any Perfection was wanting, then a Being of greater Perfection might be conceived *possible*, which could have hinder'd the Existence of this; and if so, then its Existence is not necessary, because it is not impossible but it might not have existed; but an eternal Being does exist necessarily, as has been proved before, therefore it is endued with all possible Perfection.

But farther, if there can be an eternal Being, necessarily existing of all possible Perfection, as 'tis plain there may, whatever is eternal, and necessarily exists, must have also all other possible Perfection, except we suppose that two eternal necessary Beings of unequal Perfections, and independent of one another, may possibly exist at the same time; which is an Absurdity there's no manner of countenance or colour of Reason

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son for. For why should not *one* eternal necessary Being have as much Perfection as *another*, when *both* are supposed independent and *neither* of them to have any other Principle of its Existence and Perfection but *its self*? Why should the *one* limit its own Perfections, and the *other* not? Or, if it could not have from it self any more, whence should this *Impotence* proceed in *one* eternal necessary Being, which was not in *another*? *Eternity* and *necessity of Existence* are the *same* in *both*; whatever is eternal and necessary is *equally* so; and therefore where-ever these *Attributes* are found, there must be the *same Powers*, and all the *like Consequences* must flow from them.

Another way of proving that an *eternal Being* must have all *Perfection possible* is, that the very Notion of *Possibility* does imply a *Power* somewhere correspondent to the utmost *extent* and *capacity* of things *possible*; so that to say a thing is *possible*, is to say, there is some *Power* capable of *producing* or *having* it; and therefore if you suppose an *eternal necessary Being* to *want* any *Perfection*, what is imagin'd to be *wanting* to it must be, for that very reason, *impossible*: For it cannot be conceived to *want* what is in its *own Power* to *have*, and it
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can receive nothing from *any other Being* : For no other Being of greater Power is conceivable or possible ; not a temporary Being, because its *Existence* and *Perfection* is derived from that which was *eternal* ; not an *eternal necessary* Being, because *this* which is supposed *imperfect* is as much an *eternal necessary* Being as the *other*, and therefore must have all the *same Perfections* : So that when I say that the *Perfection* supposed wanting is, for that reason, *impossible*, I do not mean only that 'tis *now impossible*, considering the *present Constitution* of things, but that 'twas *absolutely* and *from all Eternity* impossible ; because there *never* could be any *greater Power* than what an *eternal necessary Being* must have.

3. Now if *something* certainly is *eternal*, and *necessary Existence*, and all possible *Perfection*, are the *essential Characters* of an *eternal Being*, as has sufficiently been proved, then *this eternal Being* must be what we call *God* ; the *Characters* and *Attributes* of an *eternal Being* belonging to *Him* and *no other*, as will easily appear by applying them to the several *Hypotheses* before mention'd.

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That *thinking*, and *willing*, and *perception of Pleasure*, are *Perfections*, cannot be doubted of by us *Men*, who can frame no *Notions of any other, every thing else* owing all the *Goodness and Perfection* it is esteem'd for to its *Ministry and Subserviency to these*. For were there no *Beings* that enjoyed *these Perfections*, there would be no difference betwixt a *regular World* and a *Chaos, Multiplicity and Variety of Being*, and eternal universal *Nothing*.

These therefore must be the *principal Characters* of an *eternal Being*; and his *Knowledge*, and his *Power* (which is his *Will*) and his *Happiness*, must be commensurate to his *Existence*, that is *eternal necessary Qualifications*, bounded only by himself; and whatever else is *made* by this eternal Being, as 'tis proved every thing is that is *made*, must be made for his *good Pleasure*, and the *Happiness* of those *Beings* which are capable of it; there being no other end that *such a Being* as we here suppose can act upon; and all his *Works* must carry the Marks of their *Author* upon them, that is, be such as are fit for a Being of *those glorious Qualifications* to make and design for *such Ends*.

Thus

Thus may the *whole Idea* of God, as it is before described, be easily made out by *positive direct consequence* from the *Principles* just now laid down and proved; as plainly appears from the *nature and extent* of the *Principles themselves*, and *those Instances* I have given in the *chief and most distinguishing*, most *contested* Characters of the Deity.

But I am sensible this way of proving a God, tho' in it self the truest and most concluding, and the only *direct* way of demonstrating this Truth, as proceeding by a *regular Connexion* of plain intelligible *Ideas*, the *Natures and Properties* of which are as much known to us, as those of *Figures and Numbers*; I am sensible, I say, that notwithstanding all this, the Proof I have now given of a God is not like to meet with *so general* an Acceptance, or convince *so far* as a *lesser degree* of Evidence in another kind; because the *Demonstration* consisting of a great many parts, and the *Ideas* upon which it is founded being *purely intellectual*, and not admitting of any *sensible Representation*, there are but few that are capable of so much *Steadiness* and *Attention* of Mind as is required to perceive the *whole force* of the Proof.

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But then 'tis certain, that *those* who *deny a God* must not own themselves to be of this number, because they will from hence be proved to act very unreasonably in *denying* what, by their own Confession, they *do not understand*, and consequently are not *fit Judges* of; which is as absurd as to deny a *Proposition* in *Mathematicks* without being able to understand the *Demonstration* given of it: and here it will be allowed by all, that the *Demonstration* is never the *less true* and *concluding*, because there are but few that have made so great a progress in *this Science*, and are so well vers'd in *this sort of reasoning* as to perceive the *Validity* of it.

And therefore I hope I may be excused if I have spent some time and pains in what may be call'd a *metaphysical abstracted proof* of a *Deity*, for the *Satisfaction* of such as by steady Reflexion and a just Use of their Reason will easily understand it, and for the *Shame* and *Confusion* of those, who renouncing *common Opinions* and *Arguments* upon no *Grounds*, pretend to *new Discoveries* in Matters they *do not understand*, and consequently *cannot disprove*.

However, I have been as short as I possibly could upon the *positive* part of the
Argu-

Argument, and as plain as the Subject would give me leave, having made use of the *commonest easiest* Terms the Language would furnish me with upon such Matters as I have had occasion to speak of: so that all the Difficulty I can imagine in the Apprehension of what I have said, must arise from the *nature* of the *Ideas* and from the *connexion* and *variety* of *Consequences*, which are not easily to be *comprehended* in *one view* without any Assistance from *Sense*. But this could not be avoided.

Having therefore as *clearly* and *intelligibly* as I could, in a *positive direct* manner proved that *there is a God*, by shewing, That there certainly *is* some *eternal Being*; that all the *Characters* and *Attributes* of an eternal Being do agree and belong to that *Idea* we have conceived of *God*; and that therefore that *eternal Being*, which certainly *is*, is as certainly what we call *God*: Having, I say, *positively* and *directly* proved this, I proceed to make good the same Truth *negatively* or *by way of Consequence*; which, taking this for proved That *there is some eternal Being*, I do by shewing, that the *Characters* and *Attributes* of an eternal Being can agree to *nothing* else but what we

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we call *God*, therefore they must agree to *God*, therefore *that eternal Being* which certainly is, must be *God*.

In the Prosecution of which Argument, tho' I make use of the *Principles* insisted upon in the former, and the *Conclusions* from them not being *direct*, have not in *their own nature* the *same* degree of Evidence as *positive immediate Deductions* have, yet I question not but I shall be better and more generally understood, and more satisfactorily prove what I have undertaken, to a great many Persons *this way* than *the other*.

It has been proved already from the *present Existence* of things, that something must be *eternal*; we have reckon'd up the several Pretensions that can be made to *Eternity*; and consider'd the *Characters* and *Attributes* of an eternal Being.

Now, if that which is eternal be *not God*, and the *Characters* and *Attributes* of an eternal Being do not belong to him, then *something else* must be eternal, and some other of the fore mention'd Suppositions must be true; but upon Examination, I believe it will be found that *none of those* Suppositions which exclude the being of a God can be true; and therefore, what I have, proved concerning God must stand Good.

This

This it is my present Business to shew; and moreover I shall endeavour to make it appear, that as *God* is certainly *eternal*, and *nothing else* can be *eternal exclusive of him*, so likewise he is the *only eternal Being*, and whatever in any of the other *Hypotheses* is conceived to be *eternal*, if it really is so, must in some manner *entirely belong to him*.

First then, Let us frame to our selves a Notion of *Matter alone*, with its Parts all *united and atrest*: and when we have done so we shall easily judge how impossible it is to conceive that This should have existed *necessarily of it self* from all *Eternity*, and that *in time* the World, and all things in it, in the manner we *now* behold them, should *proceed from* or be *produced by it*.

But, without running over all the Characters of an eternal Being, the Absurdity of *this Supposition* will sufficiently appear by what we *plainly perceive*, and know, and what *constantly and irresistibly* offers it self to our *senses and understandings* in the present frame of things.

Solidity or the *Power of Resistance*, *Extension*, *Figure*, *Motion*, *Perception*, and *Will*, are the *chief* of all our Ideas, and what we are the best acquainted with; and
so

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so far as we perceive them distinct from one another, *Seperately existing* or *necessarily connected* our Reasonings about them are the surest of any we have; so that, if we are *mistaken* in these, I cannot see how we have, or are capable of having, any Knowledge at all.

Solidity, Extension, and Figure, I do not only perceive to be constantly united, but necessarily and inseparably to co-exist together in the same Subject, which I call *Matter* or *Body*; so that, wherever any one of these is found, I certainly conclude from thence, that there are the other two also; but it does not follow, that where-ever these three co-exist together there is *Motion, Perception, or Will*, there being no necessary Connexion between any of these Ideas and the other Ideas of Matter before mentioned, as is plain, not only from the Natures of the Ideas themselves, but from their separate Existence actually perceived by us.

How then does *Matter*, which we suppose to exist without any *Motion, Perception, or Will*, come to have *Motion* added to it?

All the *Motion* we perceive in Bodies without us is made by *Successive Impulses* from from one Body to another, where every portion

tion of Matter owes its Motion to *some other*, but this cannot help us to conceive how Motion should *begin* where every thing is at rest: the only *Idea* we receive from *Body in Motion* is that of a *Capacity of being moved* when it is at rest, and not of a *power of moving its self*: this we have from what passes *within us*, when, without any *external Impulse* upon us, by a *bare Thought or Determination* of our selves we begin a Motion in our *own Bodies* and, by that means, *communicate* it to *others* which were before at rest; which *power of beginning Motion* we call *Will*: but *Matter* is supposed to exist without *Perception* and *Will*, and consequently without this *power of beginning Motion in its self*; and there being *nothing else* to *communicate* it to it, it must *eternally continue* in the same state of *Union, Indistinction* and *Rest*.

There needs no more for the overthrowing *this Hypothesis*, no stress being ever laid upon it.

In the next place then, if we imagine *all the parts* of this *Material World* loose from one another, and *all in motion*, 'twill be quite as irrational to think that so it must have been *eternally* and *necessarily*, till
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at some certain time the scattered moving Atoms met together, or were disposed after such a manner as produced the present Structure and Constitution of things.

Many are the Absurdities and Inconsistencies this Opinion is chargeable with; but I shall at present instance but in two.

The first is, the supposing an eternal motion of different Particles of Matter before the Production of the World; which implies an infinite succession of Effects without any Cause to produce them: For Motion being something distinct from Matter, and separable from it, does not necessarily exist, because Matter exists, for then it would always exist in every Particle of Matter, nor does it exist of it self by a necessity independent of the necessity of Matter's Existence, because it cannot exist without it; and Matter could not produce it in its self from all Eternity, because it cannot produce it at all; and therefore there can be no such thing as eternal Motion or succession of Motion in different parts of Matter, because every Motion is a meer Effect and Passion, and there is no active power any where assignable or conceivable that could produce or cause such an Effect: so that to suppose an eternal Motion without an eternal

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nal Power of moving, is one very great Absurdity those are guilty of that set up the Hypothesis of *Atoms*.

The other is, the ascribing such new Effects to Matter and Motion together in the production of the World, as for a whole Eternity before never proceeded from them, and could not possibly at any time be produced by them. For Matter and Motion not implying Perception and Will, several Bodies in motion being now actually perceived to exist without them, and the whole System of moving *Atoms* being in the present Hypothesis supposed so to exist before the Beginning of the World, we shall never be able from hence to account for the Existence of Beings endued with Perception and Will, which are Qualifications, in their own Natures as utterly distinct from those of Extention, Figure, and Motion, as Figure and Motion are from one another or from any other Ideas we perceive.

That these last may be, where the other are not, is plain: How then do those other come to be added to them? If Matter at rest, whatever degree of Extention or kind of Figure it is imagin'd to have, can never make us conceive any possibility of Motion in it without the help of something else besides

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sides *Extention* and *Figure* ; neither can *Matter* and *Motion* together , what-ever variety of *Bulk*, *Texture*, or *Motion* we represent to our selves, give us any Idea of *Perception* and *Will*, or a power of producing them: But *Matter in motion* must eternally move on, or rest and move by turns if you please, without advancing to any new *Perfections*: which is too plain to need any proof, if it had not been very learnedly and fully made out already by others, and therefore I shall not enlarge in the Disparagement of *matter*, nor expose this ridiculous Scheme of things by shewing all the peculiar *Inconsistencies* in it ; but leave the farther Disproof of it to those general Arguments, which equally conclude against all the false Hypotheses concerning the being of the *World*, which I reserve till I have done with them in particular.

And the next of them to be considered is that in which it is supposed that the *World* has eternally existed under the same *Form* that we now behold it, as to the principal parts of its Structure, with a constant Succession of several of the chief *Species* or sorts of things in it.

This

This Opinion of the *Eternity of the World* has been the most exploded of any, tho' most of the Favourers of it have at the same time asserted the *eternal Existence of a God* too; and the Reason of this is, because the greatest part of the *most ancient Philosophers* and *learned Men* thought they perceived such visible Marks and Tokens of the *Newness of the World*, in the *Rise, Propagation, and Increase of Societies and Governments, Languages and Laws, Arts and Sciences*; and the *Tradition of the Original and Beginning of Things* was in *their time* so fresh, and so generally received in all Countries, that few of them were able to reconcile all this with the *eternal Duration of the World*: And *this Tradition* having all along continued, and the Truth of *those ancient Observations* having been more and more confirm'd by *many new Inventions of things since*, and some of them of such *general Use* that 'tis impossible to imagine they should not have been invented before if the World had been of a *very long continuance*, or have been lost again after they were once invented, the *same Objections* have constantly lain against the *Eternity of the World*; and these have been strengthen'd by several other Arguments drawn from

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the many *Absurdities* and *Inconsistencies* that seem to be implied in the Notion of *eternal Succession*.

All which, and whatever else can be said against the *Eternity of the World* when asserted together with the *eternal Existence of a God*, do more strongly conclude against this Supposition, when the *Being of a God* is not taken into it, under which respect I now consider it; and thus consider'd, it is moreover, besides what has been already alledg'd, attended with the *same Difficulties* and chargeable with the *same Objections* as the former *Hypothesis* was.

For *Matter* and *Motion* were no more capable of *eternally producing* such a Succession of various Objects as we perceive in the World, than they were of producing them and the World together *in time*; and yet, if we suppose an *eternal Succession* of new Objects *without a God*, they must all be produced by the Power of *Matter* and *Motion*: For every particular new Object, being produced *in time*, must owe its Being to that which was *eternal*; and nothing in this Supposition being *eternal* but *Matter* and *Motion*, which, under all Changes, continue the *same*, every new Generation of Beings must have their Original from these, the
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precedent Generation having no other Powers nor Differences from the succeeding, but what arise from the various Disposition of Matter and Motion.

This is plain as to all such Beings as want the Faculties of *Perception* and *Will*; and, upon Examination, the Case will be found to be the same with respect to such as are endued with *these Qualifications*: For even *these* also, in the present Hypothesis, must be allowed to derive their *whole Being* from *Matter* and *Motion*; because they are *temporary Beings*, which *began to be*, and there is *nothing else eternal* but *Matter* and *Motion*, and consequently there is no other *Cause* assignable for their *Production*.

Which need not be proved to those who hold the Eternity of the World *without a God*, because there are none, I believe, of this Opinion, but do ascribe the *Original* of *Perception* and *Will* to *Matter* and *Motion*, making the *former* only different *Modifications* of the *latter*: in which they act very consistently with themselves, in making an absurd Scheme all of a piece, not blending *Truth* with *Falshood*, but taking in *all the Absurdities* that do any way depend upon one another, and belong to the main building.

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However, that I may leave no room for Exception from any side, I think my self obliged to shew that, if *Perception* and *Will* are not the *Issue* and *Effects* of *Matter* and *Motion*, as has already been shewn they are not, the *Existence* of *intelligent Beings* without a *God* is *inconceivable* and *impossible*; because *no other Cause* of their *Production* can be assigned.

For suppose it should be enquired how such a *particular man* came to *exist*, how he came to *begin* to be a *conscious Being*, he did not *put himself* together in such a manner as we now perceive him to exist, he did not *give himself* those *Capacities* and *Powers* he is *conscious* of, together with his *Consciousness* of them; this is a flat *Contradiction*, and granted to be so on all hands.

Whence then did he derive this mighty *Difference of Being* we perceive in him, by which he is distinguish'd from all other that fall under our *Cognizance*? Not from *some intelligent Being* of infinitely greater *Perfections*, of the *like kind* with those he perceives in himself; not from any *mechanical Powers* of *Matter* and *Motion*: both these *Causes* are set aside in the present Enquiry.

Nothing

Nothing then remains, but that the Man which *now exists*, and *sometime ago began to be*, must have received his *Existence*, and all those *Qualifications* which distinguish him from Matter, from *some other man* of the *like nature* with himself, who existed before him; but this is *absurd and irrational*, not only upon the account of the *infinite Subordination* of *Causes* and *Effects* which follows from this Supposition, which, by every body, is rejected as a shocking repugnant Notion; but because it is hereby affirm'd that *one Being* may *solely by its own power produce another Being* of the *same Nature* and *Perfections* with its self, which I take to be the next *Impossibility* to a *Being's making it self*.

For supposing the Existence of a God, and that that may be allowed we have seen before, 'tis impossible that *God* should have *another God* of *all the like Perfections* with himself, but of a *distinct Existence*, proceeding from him: in like manner, we conceive it utterly impossible that any kind of *Matter* should *produce the least new Particle* of Matter: nay, *one part* of Matter never imparts any *Motion* to *another* without losing its self what the *other* receives; and in all other *material Productions* there is on-

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ly a *new disposition of the parts of Matter*, and not any *new Being of a distinct Nature* from it; which new Disposition is not received *entirely* from some other Being of the same kind or texture with its self, but from *material Particles and Motions* conveyed from *several distant parts of Nature*; and yet such *different dispositions of Matter* as are observ'd in the World cannot be conceived to be the *product of Matter and Motion alone*, without the Assistance and Regulation of some other Being of higher Perfections, as has been shewn before. How then is it possible that *one Mind or conscious Being* should produce another entire distinct Mind or Being of equal Perfections with its self, without losing any thing from it self, or *borrowing* any Assistance from any other kind of Being existing in the World? and what is as strange, do all this without being *conscious of this its chief Perfection*, as well as it is of all its other?

This, I say, cannot possibly be; and therefore, if the World be *eternal without a God*, all the *continual Changes and new Productions* that have ever been in it must be ascribed to *Matter and Motion*; but, Matter and Motion not being able to *produce such Effects*, from hence I conclude that the

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Eternity of the World considered as it now is, without the eternal Existence of a God is impossible.

And thus I have consider'd all the several *Hypotheses* which pretend to give any account of the present Constitution of things called the *World*, with exclusion to the Being of a God.

I shall now take a short Review of each of them in conjunction with the Existence of a God, and then pass to more general Reflections to shew the Incompetency and Fallshood of any other account whatsoever that can be given of the Original and Existence of things besides that of their proceeding in some manner from God.

But, before I enter upon the Consideration of these *Hypotheses*, which do all, tho' in different manners, establish an eternal Co-existence of Matter and Mind, I think it necessary to premise something concerning the Nature and Distinction of these two kind of Beings, as far as we are capable of perceiving them; that so I may cut off a great many *Disputes* and *Mistakes* occasion'd by the Confusion of our Ideas upon this Subject, and what I have to say afterwards may be better understood.

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I do not perceive any such *Connexion* betwixt the Ideas of *Perception* and *Will* and those of *Extension*, *Figure*, and *Motion*, that where-ever the former are, there must the latter be also; nor do I see any Reason why *Perception* and *Will* may not exist separately from *Extension*, *Figure*, and *Motion*, as well as *Extension*, *Figure*, and *Motion* may exist separately from *Perception* and *Will*; only because these are actually perceiv'd so to exist, and we have not yet been actually conscious of such a separate Existence of the other. But this does not hinder but that *Perception* and *Will* may so exist, and have a Subject or Substance of their own, distinct from that which supports these Qualities of *Extension*, *Figure*, and *Motion*.

If *Thinking* and *Willing* were common to every Being we knew, we could no more frame an Idea of a pure material Substance existing without these Qualifications, than we can now of a pure thinking Substance, existing without those Qualities we attribute to Matter only: but 'tis certain from an actual Separation of these different Ideas perceivable in different Subjects, that some of them may exist without the other, tho' without this actual Separation we could not have

have been so certain of it; and therefore, tho' the other have never yet been perceived to exist separately from these, it does not follow from thence that they cannot so exist: but, considering the vast distance and distinction in the Natures of the several Ideas, without any conceivable Resemblance or Relation to one another, 'tis very probable they do arise from different Principles, and are founded in different Subjects.

However, having no farther Certainty of it from natural Reason, and I purposely wave all other Proof at present, let us suppose that Perception and Will, Extension, Figure, and Motion, have all the same common Subject to support them, are radically and ultimately founded in the same Substance, and issue from the same Principle; which Subject, Substance or Principle, we know nothing more of than that it is something which sustains these different Qualities, or whatever else we call them, which could not exist of themselves without it: Supposing, I say, all this, 'tis ridiculously, and without any colour of Reason, inferr'd from hence, that therefore Perception and Will are only different Modifications or Dispositions of Extension, Figure, and Motion, or do in some manner or other wholly re-

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sult from them: For why may not *distinct Qualities co-exist* together in the same Subject, without being made one from another? or why should *Perception* and *Will* be Modifications of *Extension, Figure, and Motion*, any more than *Extension, Figure, and Motion* are different Modes of *Perception* and *Will*? I cannot see what ground they can have for the contrary of either of these, who affirm what we call the *Mind* or *Soul* of Man to be nothing else but *Matter* under a peculiar *Disposition of its Parts*.

But that *Thinking* and *Willing*, upon a Supposition that they actually exist in *matter* and cannot exist without it, are not therefore *Modifications* or *Effects* of the other *Qualities* of *Matter* which are antecedently in it before the Addition of *these*, may be farther illustrated by this Instance.

Motion is something added to the original and essential *Qualities* of *Matter*, owes its Capacity of existing to it, and cannot exist without it; but 'tis plain that *Motion* is no *Extension* or effect of *Solidity, Modification* or *Figure*, which are every thing we conceive in *Motion* before *Matter* is added to it; but something in its own nature distinct from all these, and not resulting from any conceivable Difference of them: So
that

that it does not follow that, because *Matter* is *solid*, or so and so *extended* or *figured*, that therefore it must be *in motion*.

And if this be true of *Motion*, it must be much more so of *Perception* and *Will*: For *Motion* does involve *Matter* in the very *Idea* of it: there's no conceiving of *Motion* without conceiving at the same time something that is *moved*; and I cannot consider a thing as *moved*, without considering it as *extended* too, and *Extension* necessarily implies the other *essential Properties* of *Matter*: but I can form a *Notion* of *Perception* and *Will*, and be conscious of something *perceiving* and *willing*, without having any *Ideas* at the same time of *Solidity*, *Extension*, *Figure*, or *Motion*; and therefore, if *Motion* may be joyned to the other *Qualities* of *Matter* without *resulting* from them, tho' they are *necessarily implied* in the *Idea* we have of it, 'tis *much more probable* that *Perception* and *Will* may *co-exist* with *Motion* and all the rest of the *material Qualities*, without being the *effects* or *product* of them, when they carry no *Marks* of such an *Original* upon them, and in their *Conception* have no *manner* of appearance of any *Relation* to them. And, if it does not follow that because *Matter* is of such a *na-
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ture, and so modified, therefore it moves, much less can it be inferr'd that, because Matter is so and so disposed and moved, therefore it thinks and wills.

This being premised, it plainly appears from hence, that 'tis *much more probable in Reason* that God should be the *only eternal Being*, than that *Matter*, any way considered, should be *co-eternal* with him: For the *Notion of God* is full and compleat, without any *Consideration of Matter*, and the *Addition of the Idea of Matter* to it does not add any thing to the *Perfection of the Divine Being*.

The *Power of producing Matter and Motion*, and forming an *infinite variety of Beings* out of them, is indeed a *Perfection* very worthy of *God*, and what we justly attribute to him; but the *actual Existence* of any of these does no way *heighten* the *Idea* we have of him, whom we conceive to be *as perfect in himself before their Existence, as after it.*

The *actual Communication* of some of his *Perfections* to a particular rank of his *Creatures*, and the *giving* them the *Use* and *Enjoyment* of his *other Works*, do raise a *new Idea* of him in *them*, which they call
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by the name of *Goodness*; but this they look upon only as a *voluntary opening* and disclosing the *Glory* of his *original Nature*, and not a *necessary additional Advancement* of it.

It is therefore *most agreeable* to our *Reason*, and all the *Notions* we have of the *Divine nature*, that *God* should have *existed alone from all Eternity*, and *in time produced the World* and all things in it.

But, if any Man had rather believe that *Matter at rest*, or *Matter and Motion*, or the *present Frame of the World* with the several kinds of beings in it, were *co-eternal* with *God*, he must at the same time hold that

Whatever was *co-eternal* with *God* did either *subsist eternally of its self*, *distinctly* and *independently* of him,

Or is really a *necessary* part of the *Divine nature*, and helps to make up the *Idea* of *God*,

Or did *eternally proceed* from him because he had *eternally an effectual will to produce it*:

But, the first of these *Suppositions* cannot be true; for neither *Matter it self*, nor *Matter and Motion*, nor the *present Constitution of things* can be *eternal independently* of *God*; because

because, as has been fully proved already, neither of them can be supposed to have *existed eternally without a God.*

From which proof it sufficiently appears, that neither of them have the *essential Properties* of an *eternal Being* viz. *necessary Existence* and *all possible Perfection*; nor the *Consequence* of them, viz. the *actual production* of all *temporary Beings*:

For which soever of them is supposed, there are *suppos'd* also wanting those *Perfections* we ascribe to *God*, which are certainly the *chief* if not the only ones *imaginable* by us. And there can be no *necessity* of *Existence* where *these* are wanting, because then we may suppose a *necessary eternal Being* with them *which will be of greater Perfections* than another necessary eternal Being without them; but we cannot suppose two necessary and independent eternal Beings of *unequal Perfections*, therefore what wants any of *these Qualifications*, we ascribe to *God*, cannot exist necessarily and of it self

And further, what we suppose destitute of *Knowledge* and *Will* can have no sufficient power of producing Temporary Beings, was it *in its self* allowed to be *eternal*; as is manifest from what has been said upon the several *Hypotheses* that exclude the Being of a God : And

And therefore what ever is supposed *eternal* which does not enter into the *Idea* we have given of *God*, must be taken into it as *necessarily belonging* to the *Divine Nature*, or be look'd upon as the *free eternal effect* of his *eternal Will*.

Thus some have affirm'd that the *World*, and *every thing* we see or know, is *God*:

Others, that all things flowed from *God*; by which, if they mean *necessary Emanation*, they must be referred to his *Being* and *Essence*, if *production* to his *Will*.

So that however we express our selves upon these Matters, *every thing* that we can imagine; or frame any Notion of, must be either *God*, or some way proceed from him, be reckoned to his *Nature* or his *Works*.

The *Inference* from all which is this: That 'tis *most rational* to think that no more belongs to the *Idea* of *God* than what we have before ascribed to him, and that he did *in time*, of his own free will, produce *every thing* not contained in that *Idea*, even *original Matter* and *Motion* as well as the *frame* and *Structure* of the *World*, and the *Variety* of *particular Beings* in it.

But if any *Man* asserts the *Eternity* of *any* of these together with *God* in the full extent

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extent of the Idea we have given of him, however his Opinion may be *true* or *false*, it can make *no change* in our Thoughts with regard to *Religion*: the *Idea* of God, being so far the *same* here as we have establisht it the *same Consequences* will every where flow from it; and the Assertors of any such Opinion will bear the *same Relation* to God, and be under the *same Obligations* with us that differ from them in *some other things* relating to God; which however held, have no other *Influence* upon us than as we are obliged not to Entertain any *false Notions* of God *willingly* when we may have *better Information*; or, if we cannot, yet *other Opinions* may appear *more suitable* to our Reason, and more for the *Honour of God*; which I take to be the present Case, and therefore shall wave any further Enquiry into these Matters, as having no prospect of a Possibility of knowing any thing more about them.

Thus have I, with as much Brevity and Dispatch as the Subject would allow, examined all the Accounts that are or can be given of the *present Existence* of things. And, from particular Observations upon each of them, not all that might be made but such as I judg'd sufficient for my purpose,

pose, I think, I have made it very evident, that there *must be a God*, or Being of such a nature as I before described, who was the *true and only Cause or Author of every thing we see, or know, or has ever been, beside him*; and without the Supposition of such a Being, the World could not possibly have ever existed any other way.

I shall now add some *general Reflexions* to strengthen the *common Hypothesis* concerning the *Original of the World*, and to conclude the Proof of a God.

That the World is as we now perceive, must be ascribed to *Chance, Necessity, or Wisdom*; but *Chance is nothing*, *Necessity* without a God *unintelligible*, and therefore *Wisdom*, or what is meant by it, *God*, who is a *wise Being*, made the World, and all things in it, in the *form and manner* we now behold and admire.

The World's being *made by chance* is being *we know not how*, being made *without any Cause*: and to speak thus, is to use Words without any Meaning under them.

There's no Man that has made any Enquiries into the Nature of Things, but knows, that nothing can be that before was

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not, without owing its *Original* to some *real positive Being* of antecedent *Existence*. *Inadequate and insufficient Causes* are often assigned for the *Production* of things; because being *next* to, and *immediately preceding* the *Effects*, they are *solely* taken notice of, without any regard had to their *Subordination* to, or *Direction* by others; and oftentimes something is thought to be the *next* and *immediate Cause* of a thing which is no ways concern'd in it: but in both these Cases, 'tis by reason of some *real Efficiency* observed that these Judgments are made, which must all proceed from some *real Being*, tho' there may be a Mistake in attributing it to a *wrong one*, or to *one* that had only a *share* in the *Effect*; and therefore there must be *something real* assign'd, which was *as much* and *as properly* the *immediate Cause* of the *meeting of the Parts* of Matter in order to make a *World*, as the parts of Matter so met were the *Cause* of the *Production of the World*; which can be nothing else but *such and such particular Determinations of Figure and Motion* in the several parts of Matter; but these must be either *eternal*, or the *Effect* of certain *eternal fixt Rules* resulting from the *Natures of Matter and Motion*, or be made by a *divine*

Power:

Power; in all which there can be nothing casual, but every thing necessary or providential.

For, supposing the whole System of Matter so and so figured and moved, we cannot consider it as indifferent to several Effects, but necessarily determined to one, which must inevitably follow such a supposed Disposition, unless something extrinsical to Matter should restrain or change the Determination. If any thing extrinsical to Matter, or besides Matter and Motion be allowed, it must be God; if there be nothing else existing but Matter and Motion, then are all the Effects resulting from them necessary, because whatever Disposition or Motion of Matter we suppose, and whensoever in the whole extent of Eternity we suppose it, every following Effect must have been what it is, and there could have been no other produced in the room of it.

The Reason why certain Portions of Matter so and so figured and moved do not always necessarily produce the same Effects is, because their particular Determinations are restrained or over-ruled by the necessary Impulses of other extrinsical Matter, or the greater Power of the Divine Will; which, being unperceiv'd by us, make us look

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upon several of these *particular* Effects as *casual*, which can only; and that very improperly too *with respect to our Comprehension*, be stiled so; whereas *in reality, with respect to the universal Nature and Efficiency of things*, they must be either *necessary or voluntary*.

But if we consider the *whole Frame* and *Collection of things together*, we cannot form any sort of *Idea of Chance*, either *in the World as it now is, or in its original Formation*, unless we will be so ridiculous as to say *every thing that is is casual*; that every thing that *has been from all Eternity happen'd by chance*, and that it was *by chance* that *Matter and Motion were eternal*, or that *any thing existed at all*, *Chance* having the same Title to *all these Effects* as to *any one of them*.

I need not consider the other *Occasion* we take of forming this *Notion of Chance* from the *Indifference* we are oftentimes conscious of in our selves with regard to *several contrary Actions*, which makes the following of one *Action* rather than another, where the *Cause* seems equally disposed to both, be look'd upon as a *casual Result* rather than a *proper Effect*. This may be accounted for otherwise by the

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Preponderancy of some motive determining us to act *this way* rather than *another*, and the seeming *Indifference* be shewed to be the effect of our *Ignorance* of the whole Nature and all the Consequences of the thing in question, and the several Reasons and ways of acting; but there is no occasion for such a Proof, because those that say the World was made *by chance* cannot be supposed to use the Word in *this Sense*, forasmuch as they do not acknowledge that *God* or any *intelligent Being* was concern'd in the *Production* of it; or, if they did, would they be so absurd, and entertain such low Notions of him, as to think that some *chance Thought* or *Action* of his produced it.

'Tis plain then, that *Chance* is nothing else but an *insignificant Word*, and an *ignorant Pretence*, which has no *Sense* nor *Reason* under it, and therefore can give us no manner of light in our Enquiries into the *Nature* and *Original* of things.

Neither will *Necessity*, which is the next thing to be consider'd, give us much better Satisfaction: For, if we examine this Notion well, 'twill evidently appear that there can be no *Necessity* for the *present Existence* of the World in the manner we behold.

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The Question is not, whether 'twas *necessary* that God should make such a World as this, supposing there is a God, tho' this may easily be proved that 'twas not; but, whether 'twas *absolutely necessary* there should be such a World as this *without a God*: and I think it may be *certainly demonstrated* that it was not. For nothing can be said to be *absolutely necessary*, but what 'tis altogether *impossible* should be *otherwise*; but 'tis not *impossible* that the World should *never have existed*, or should *ever be destroyed* now it does exist: For if this be *absolutely impossible*, then is it *absolutely impossible* that there should be any thing of *greater Perfection and Power* than the *World*; for if there was, that *Being* of *greater Perfection and Power* than the *World* could have *hindred* the *World* from *existing*, or could now *destroy* it; but 'tis not *impossible* there should be such a *Being* because it is not *impossible* to *conceive* such a *Being*, for what *may be conceived* to exist *may exist*.

But if any Man shall say he cannot conceive such a *Being* as could *hinder Matter from existing*, or *destroy* it now it does exist, because he cannot conceive a *Power* of *making something out of nothing*, or of *reducing something to nothing*, the last of which

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is here supposed, and no Account can be given of the *present Existence* of things without allowing the *first* if *such a Being as this* in question is supposed, and the *Necessity of the World's Existence* is taken away: If any Man, I say, should object this, I answer, that it seems to me *conceivable* enough from the *Idea* I have of God, that what is here ascribed to him may fall within the compass of his *Power*; which reaching to *all things possible*, that is, to all things which do not imply a *Contradiction*, may extend to the Acts of *Creation* and *Annihilation*; which, tho' the *manner* of the Performance be *incomprehensible*, cannot be proved to carry any *Contradiction* in them.

However, if there be those that pretend they cannot *comprehend* the *Possibility* of these Actions, yet *this* is very *conceivable* by any Man, that there may be *some Being* of that *Perfection* and *Power*, that tho' he could not *hinder Matter* from *existing*, or *reduce* it to *nothing* afterwards, yet he might have *hinder'd* it from being put into any *Motion*, *Form*, or *Order*, and continued it in that State, or could *reduce* it now to a *confused*, *unmoving Chaos*, or scatter it into *innumerable incoherent Particles*. There's no manner of *Difficulty* for a Man to frame

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a Notion of these things, who has seen frequent Instances of the *same kind of Power* in a *lesser degree* exercised by *Men*. And this is sufficient to overthrow the *Necessity* of the *present Frame and Constitution* of things, which was the thing design'd.

If therefore the World and all things in it, in the Condition we now behold, do not subsist by a *necessity of Being*, nor are the *results of Chance*, it immediately follows that they are the *Effect and Product of Wisdom*, the *Workmanship and Contrivance* of a *wise Agent*.

This is certainly the most *rational Hypothesis* that can be devised or imagined; for we that maintain this Opinion, have *clear and distinct Ideas* of *Power* and *Wisdom* by which we explain the *Origin* of Things; but those who ascribe the *Existence* and *Structure* of the World to any thing else, have no manner of Ideas of what they ascribe them to. No Man has any Idea of *Chance* or *Necessity*, except he annexes the Idea of *Power* to them; and he can have no Idea of *Power* without *Knowledge*, all *Power* proceeding *originally from Mind*, which by *Consciousness* we are *Sensible* of, and we can frame no Notion of any other *Seat or Spring*

Spring of Power; and therefore we make some *Mind* or *intelligent Being* the *Author* of every thing, as being the *only conceivable Fountain* of all Power.

Our *Notions* of *Wisdom*, *Contrivance*, *Design*, are as clear as that of *Power*, and known the same way: And if they are ever plainly perceivable in their *Works* and *Effects* they are so in the *Frame* and *Constitution* of the *World*, and the several parts of it. If we have any reason to conclude that *Towns* and *Cities* were *built*, and *Kingdoms* and *Commonwealths* were *modell'd* by the *Thought* and *Contrivance* of *intelligent Beings*, we have much more Cause to believe that the *Universe* was *made*, *fashion'd*, and *disposed* by the *Counsel* and *Wisdom* of some more perfect and capacious *Mind*; the *Marks* and *Prints* of *Wisdom* being plainer and more legible in the *Oeconomy* of the *World* than any of the most admired *Works* of *Man*.

And therefore, if we allow our selves to have any *Ideas* of *Power* and *Knowledge* we must confess that *Power* is inseparable from *Knowledge*; and that there is no *Power* but there is some *Knowledge* commensurate to it, it being utterly inconceivable that any thing should be, or be made, which there is no *Being* that knows.

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And this, I think is of it self Ground enough to believe *there is a God* who was the Author of the World and every thing in it, without carrying the Proof any higher; but for those that will not be satisfied with *this*, I have given a *farther* Demonstration of the Being of God, not with any Hopes of convincing them, but to make it impossible for them to urge any thing to the contrary.

Thus have I finished the *Proof of a God*, and (as I think) made it *very evident*, that there really *is such a Being*, and that what we call God is a Being of *such a nature* as I before described, invested with all *these Characters and Properties* I there attributed to him.

Which Considerations, together with those plain and easy Reflexions before suggested upon our selves and our *own Nature*, if carefully attended to, will certainly convince us of the *Reality of all those Relations* I have supposed between God and Man; and furnish us with many *direct and undeniable Arguments* of the *Truth and Necessity* of Religion: which is the third Thing I proposed, and the principal part of the Design I am pursuing in this Discourse.

III, From

III. From the Knowledge I have shewn we have or are capable of having concerning the *Humane and Divine Natures*, I shall deduce a *positive and direct Proof of Religion*.

Religion, in short, is whatever we are *obliged to by God*. In order therefore to prove there is such a thing as Religion, we must shew that *Man is capable of being obliged to act* after such a particular manner, that *God has a Power of obliging him so to act*; and that *Man is actually under such an Obligation*, or *God does actually will and require something of him*.

Now 'tis plain by the Account we have before given of the *Nature of Man*, and every one that consults himself may find it to be so, that he has in several cases a *Power of determining himself to act or not to act*, and a *Power of acting or not acting according to such Determination*; that he is *influenced to act* several ways by *different Motives and Prospects*; and that he oftentimes suffers himself to be influenced by certain *Considerations*, which he *might and ought not to have acted by*, as he plainly perceives and knows by *condemning himself afterwards*
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for what he has done ; and that he often *neglects or refuses* to obey such Motives and Incitements to Action which he *ought* to have followed, as his *own Approbation* of them before and after the Neglect or Refusal convinces him of. From whence it evidently follows, that a Man *may be obliged* to act one particular way rather than another ; that is, there may be such *Reasons and Motives* for his acting *this way*, that, upon a just Ballance of all the several Inducements that could be offered to him for *any other*, he must acknowledge *ought* to *determine* him ; so that should he act *this way*, he must *necessarily approve himself*, and should he act *any other* he must *necessarily condemn himself*.

That Being which has a Power of offering such Reasons and Motives to any Man as these, may properly be said to have a *Power of obliging* him to act such or such a way.

And that God has this Power is very manifest if we consider what it is that *influences and determines* us to act ; which being nothing else but some kind of *Pain or Pleasure in present or in prospect*, God, who can do all things possible, and consequently who can put us into, and continue us to
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all Eternity in a *state of Pain or Pleasure*, the greatest our Natures are capable of, can, by annexing these to different ways of acting, offer such Motives to us, as we shall be forced to acknowledge ought to determine us to act one particular way; and therefore God can, if he please, oblige us so to act.

The only Question then is, Whether we are *actually* under such Obligation; whether God has prescribed *such Actions*, and annexed *such Consequences* to different kinds of Action as make it *necessary* to our *Happiness* to act that particular way he has prescribed.

But, before I enter upon the particular Resolution of this Question, I think it requisite to give a fuller Account of the *Nature and Ground* of what we call *Obligation* or *Duty*, together with the *Right and Power* of obliging.

Now 'tis plain from what has been already said, That an *Obligation* with respect to *Man* is nothing else but such a *Reason* or *Motive* as when duly offered to him necessarily determines him to *chuse* or *prefer* one way of acting before another; and this *Reason* or *Motive* can be nothing else but a greater degree of *Misery* or *Happiness* to be avoided

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avoided or obtained by *this* acting, than all things considered can be avoided or obtained by acting *any other way*. Such a Reason or Motive as this, does, in the strictest and properest Sense of the Word, *oblige* us to act according to it; or, which is all one, *we ought*, or *it is our Duty*, so to do; that is, we find our selves under a *necessity of Judging thus*.

There is no other *Notion* or *Ground* of Obligation imaginable; or if there be any other pretended, upon Examination it will be found to be ultimately resolvable into this.

What is meant by the *Right* and *Power of obliging*, in what respects they are the *same*, or, at least, only distinct Conceptions of the same thing, and in what respects they are different, will plainly appear if we consider the several Instances to which these Notions are applied.

All the Beings capable of *obliging* or *being obliged* are those we call *intelligent Beings*; which, as far as our Knowledge, in these Matters reaches, are only *God, Angels, and Men*.

Whether there are any *Angels* or *middle Natures* betwixt *God* and *Men*, and how they *Act* with regard to other intelligent Beings,

Beings, *natural Reason* does not certainly inform us, but, *in general*, with respect to all the *intelligent Beings* we can frame any Notions of, it may be affirmed that *no one* has a *Right* or *Power* of obliging another to act such a particular way he prescribes, any farther than he has a *Power* of contributing to the *Happiness* or *Misery* of that Being he so prescribes to.

Thus we are led to conclude by all we know concerning God and *our selves*;

For first, as to *God*; I am not able to comprehend, how he can any *otherwise* induce an *Obligation* upon Men to obey him, or live according to the Rules he prescribes, than by *making them* know that he has it in his *Power* to render them *happy* or *miserable*, according as they *obey* or *disobey* him; and that he *will* certainly make them the one or the other, as their *Actions* shall deserve.

'Tis not his great and supereminent Power in creating Men and giving them *Being*, which is *solely in its self* the ground and foundation of his Title to their Obedience: This, without a *capacity* of *being happy*, could never become a Reason or Motive of acting to them, and consequently, could never ~~be~~ found any Obligation:

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gation: For was *Misery* the certain *unalterable Condition* of their being, and they were sure their *Misery* was to have *no End*, and was capable of *no Increase*, how could the *Author of their Being* be imagined to oblige them to obey his Commands, or act one way rather than another, when he could not offer or propose any thing to them which would determine them so to act; all degrees of *Pleasure*, or *lesser Pain*, being supposed impossible; so that which way soever they acted, there could be no ground for approving themselves for it, because they were not capable of that or any other *Pleasure*; nor for condemning themselves, because their *Misery* was not capable of that, or any other *Addition*. They might indeed, by an *overruling Power*, be forced to such and such *Actions*; but this is not a *rational Obligation*, which is acknowledged and submitted to as *suitable and agreeable to Reason*, and performed with the *full Concurrence of the Will* of those that obey it.

In vain then, and very falsely, do some nice abstracted Thinkers magnify the *metaphysical Excellence and Perfection* of pure *Being* or *Existence*, even when joined with the *extreamest degree of Misery*: a Moment's

ment's Experience would soon convince them that *to be*, was no otherwise the *Perfection* of a *rational Being* than as it gave him a *Capacity of being happy*: but if they could be supposed to continue in their Opinion in such a State, and think it *better to be miserable than not to be* at all, the *Satisfaction* of knowing themselves *to be* must out-balance the other *Misery* they felt, and consequently, upon that account, give the Author of their Being a Title to their Obedience: but then his *Right of obliging them* would be *solely founded* in his *Power of making them less or more miserable*, by giving, continuing, or taking away, that *Satisfaction*, they enjoy: which confirms the Truth of what I assert.

This will farther appear if, in the next place, we consider *the Right and Power of obliging* that *Men* have or pretend to have over one another; which, whatever *kind or extent* it be of, must be all *founded in*, and *commensurate to*, their *power of contributing to the Happiness or Misery* of one another.

But oftentimes it so happens, that some Men demand to be obeyed by others, and require them to live according to their Orders and Directions, when, at the same time, they have no Power, nor ever will

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have, to reward their Obedience, or punish their Disobedience so as to make it more for their Interest while they live here to obey than disobey them. Upon which account, the *Right of obliging* is oftentimes lookt upon as existing *separate* from the *Power of obliging*, but without any ground.

For, if there be a *God* that will judge the Actions of Men, and give to every one according to his work, and the Persons requiring Obedience from others are commission'd by *him* to require it, they have a *Power* as well as a *Right of obliging* them to it, for they have a *Power of proposing such Motives and Reasons* for their acting, as are sufficient to determine them to obey rather than disobey, viz. the *Rewards and Punishments annexed by God* to their Obedience or Disobedience; and consequently they have a *Power of contributing to their Happiness or Misery*, tho' they cannot be the *immediate Instruments* of either themselves.

But, if there be *no God*, then are they not commission'd by *him* to command others, but they *usurp* upon the common Liberty and Equality of Mankind; and, in this case they have *no more a Right* than they have a
Power

Power of obliging those whose Interest it is with respect to *this Life* not to obey them; as will more fully appear hereafter, under another Head.

Another Instance there is, where the *Power of obliging* is, or may be exercised *without the Right*; and that is, when some Men by the Advantages of *more Skill and Strength* than others, *without any Authority from God* command their Obedience upon the prospect of great Rewards and Punishments, in such things where the Persons so commanded are left to their Liberty by God to act either way, as shall seem best, or most for their Advantage to them *in this Life*: In which case, those that prescribe such particular Actions to others, have a *Power of obliging* them to obey because they have a *Power of determining* them to act by the Consideration of *greater Happiness* to be obtained, or *Misery* to be avoided by acting that particular way they prescribe than would attend the contrary way of acting, but they have *no Right* to use this Power, because they are *themselves* under *greater Obligations*, with respect to God, *not to employ it*, than *those* upon whom it is exercised are *with respect to them* to obey it: but if there be no God, then is their *Power* their *Right*.

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From all which it follows, that where-ever there is a *Right of obliging* there is a *Power of obliging*, and, where there is an *absolute uncontrollable Power* of obliging there is, for that very Reason, a *Right* also; but where there is a *subordinate dependent Power* of obliging, it may be exercised *without Right*, that is, *contrary to some Obligations* which the Persons who exercise it owe to a *Superiour Power*.

But here, by a *Right of obliging* I would be understood to mean a *Liberty of offering such Motives and Considerations to rational Beings*, as when duly applied will determine them to act according to them, with the full Consent of their Mind, and make them infallibly approve and be pleased with themselves for so doing; not a title to order and dispose of them and their Actions by an irresistible Force, according to the free and unlimited Pleasure of that Being to whom the Title is supposed to belong.

Whether God has such a Right as this over his Creatures, is no part of the Enquiry now; but that he has such a Right and Power of obliging as I have explained, is sufficiently proved from the necessary Attributes of God before specified, and from the Nature and Ground of all Obligation, of which I have here given a particular account.

Whether

Whether God has a Right and Title to our Obedience upon any other Foundation but that of his Power to *make us happy*; whether 'tis possible for Man to act voluntarily upon any other Reason or Motive but that of *his own Happiness*; and whether *Happiness* be the *ultimate End* of all our *Actions*, and the *ultimate Ground* of all *Obligation*, or only a *subordinate* but *necessary* and *inseparable* Consideration; if what I have already said upon these Matters does not satisfy, I shall no farther dispute; because I am very well assured that whatever other Grounds or Motives of our Obedience to God may be imagined by some who pretend to act upon more *noble* and *disinterested* Principles than that of their own Happiness, 'tis impossible to persuade a Man who does not yet believe any Religion at all to become religious, except it can be plainly, or probably at least, made out to him, that he shall better his Condition by it. This I am sure is the only Argument that can prevail upon an Unbeliever to *embrace Religion*; and I firmly believe whoever fairly consults himself, will find that he neither *does* nor *can* act upon any other ground. 'Tis true indeed, we often act without knowing or considering what the Conse-

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quences will be, and we are made and disposed after such a manner, that we readily acknowledge our selves obliged to submit to the Will and Commands of God *without any express Consideration of future Happiness* to be obtained by our Obedience; but if it could be evidently prov'd to us that *Misery* would be the *certain Consequence* of those Actions we thought our selves upon the first View obliged to, we should then be forced to acknowledge that we were mistaken in our first Judgments, and that it would be more reasonable to act *another way* which we were assured would be *more for our Happiness*.

These Things being premised, I return to the main Question, Whether we are *actually under any Obligations to God*, or which is the same thing in other terms, *Whether there be any such thing as Religion?* And in this manner I shall prove there is.

First, I shall shew that there is *such a particular way of acting*, such a *course of Actions*, or *Scheme and Model of living*, which whoever duly and fairly reflects upon, will be forced to acknowledge that if he did live after That manner he should approve himself
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for so doing, and if he lived otherwise, he should condemn himself for it; and therefore, he that finds himself necessarily determin'd to approve such a particular way of living, and to condemn the contrary, must acknowledge that he ought or is obliged to act accordingly. From whence I shall draw this Inference, that therefore all things considered, it must be more for his Happiness to act this way than any other, because were it not, his free unbiass'd Judgment could not, upon a fair Ballance of all the several Reasons and Motives of Action, approve him when he did so act, and condemn him when he did not; there being nothing else but the different Motives of Happiness and Misery that can determine the Mind to these different Acts: And from thence it follows, that he is truly and really obliged to act as he judges he ought to act.

Secondly, I shall prove that God, who was the Author of our Being, gave us such a Nature, by which we are necessarily determined to judge after this manner, with that End and Design that we should exercise and employ those other Faculties and Powers he has furnish'd us with suitably hereunto; and that consequently, what our Reason tells

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us *ought to be done*, we are *commanded by God to do*; that 'tis *God who proposes those prevailing Reasons and Motives which determine us to act*, and gives them all the *Power and Influence they have over us*; and therefore, what *God has made to appear reasonable or unreasonable to us to do*, will accordingly conduce to our *Happiness or Misery*, and upon that account *oblige us to act or not to act*. And farther, I shall endeavour to shew under this Head, that *God purposely created us after such a manner with a Design to oblige us to such and such Performances*, not only from the *general Consideration of the Make and Nature of Man*, but from *many other Tokens and Indications of such an End or Design plainly visible in the World*. And the *Sum of what we are thus obliged to by God*, is what we call our *Religion*.

Thirdly, I shall *positively and directly* prove from the *Nature of Religion it self*, that a *regular Practise of all those Duties or Obligations of which it consists* would certainly conduce to the *greatest Happiness* Man is capable of, considered only in *his present Condition*, as included within the *Bounds of this Life*.

Fourth-

Fourthly, I shall shew that the *Defect of such a Practice*, and the *Consequences* of it, do necessarily lead us to the *Acknowledgment* of such a *future State*, as is sufficient to determine us to prefer one particular way of acting before another, upon *such Reasons and Motives*. that is, *such Degrees of Happiness and Misery* as we are sure greater and more powerful cannot be offered to us.

From all which Considerations, the *Certainty* and *Necessity* of Religion will be plainly and fully evinced.

1. First then, I am to shew that there is *one particular way of acting* which we are necessarily determined to prefer to any other; so that, upon a clear and impartial View of pure natural Reason, we cannot but like, approve, or be pleased with this way of acting, and dislike, condemn, or be displeased with the contrary; and farther, that we must judge or acknowledge that what we thus like or approve we ought or are obliged to do, and what we dislike or condemn we ought or are obliged not to do; and consequently that we are really obliged to act according

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according to such Judgments, because it must be *more for our Happiness* so to act.

That there are some *natural Notions* of Good and Evil, Right and Wrong, or some such certain *Distinctions founded in or resulting from the Natures and Relations* of things, as cannot be altered or destroyed by any arbitrary Agreement or Institution whatsoever; and that these are perceivable by the *bare use of our Reason* the same way that any other part of our Knowledge is, are Truths which the *greatest and wisest* part of Mankind have constantly owned, however they may have differ'd in assigning *which they were*, and *what were the true Grounds and Foundations* of them.

Now, to put these Matters beyond all reasonable doubt, and to cut off all occasion of Contest concerning them, I only desire this may be granted me, that there are some things so *clearly and fully* proposed to the Mind, that a Man cannot *deny* or *with-hold* his *Assent* to them, and that wherever this happens, there is the *greatest Certainty* we are capable of: This being granted, it necessarily follows that we may be as certain that such or such Things *ought* or *ought not to be done*, as that such or such Things

Things are or are not after this or that manner, or are so and so related to one another.

As for Example: I may be as fully satisfied that I ought to desire and endeavour after my own Happiness, and that I ought not to take away the Happiness of another Man, when I know I shall not add to my own by it, as I can be of the *Truth* of these Propositions; that *every thing that moves is*; that 'tis impossible the same thing should exist and not exist at the same time; that is, in both these Instances the things assented to have the same Suitableness or Agreeableness to our Reason, and the same Force or Violence would be offered to our Understandings by a Denial of either; Which is all the Ground and Criterion of Certainty assignable by us.

Several other moral Propositions might be brought, or deduced from these, that carry an irresistible Conviction along with them, not to be over-ruled by any after Considerations: But the common Rules and Maxims of Morality which are look'd upon as natural, are not so general as those before instanced in, nor have in all respects the same degree of Certainty belonging to them; but what they are, how they are known, and how far they partake of Certainty and Evidence,

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dence, I shall now give a short Account, and from thence prove that we are *necessarily determined to assent to and approve these also*, and to *condemn and deny the contrary* of them ; and consequently, that we have all the Reason in the World to believe it will conduce more to our Happiness to act up to these Principles, than to pursue a different course of Life.

The *highest and most general* moral Duties commonly instanced in, are such as these, That God is to be worshipped, that Parents are to be obeyed, and all other natural and civil Relations proportionably to be respected ; that we ought to abstain from all sorts of Intemperance and Excess, and provide all things necessary for the continuance of our Life ; that we should not do any other man an Injury, but contribute all we can to the Happiness of Mankind, and more particularly that Society we are of.

Now these, and such like Propositions as these, are known or found out by the Use and Employment of our natural Faculties the same way that all other Truths are ; that is, Men are taught or made to have the Ideas these Terms belong to, or they get them by their own Observation, and then, by comparing them together, they immediately acknow-

acknowledge such or such a *Relation* betwixt them, without being influenced by any other *Motive* to judge so but what results from the *Things themselves*.

The *Relations* indeed of *moral Ideas*, as well as the *Ideas themselves*, are commonly learnt from others first, before Men are capable of finding them out themselves; but this is no more an Argument that their Assent to such kind of Propositions is only the *Effect of Education*, and consequently a *meer Prejudice* and no right Judgment, than 'it would be an Argument to prove that all the *Mathematical Knowledge* a Man has is nothing else but a *Set of false Notions* thrust upon his Understanding by *Education*, because he happen'd to be taught the first Grounds and Elements of this Science while he was young, before he was capable of finding them out by his own Observation; for, when we afterwards come to review the *moral Knowledge* we got when we were Children, let us be never so jealous over our selves, and take all the Care we can to deliver our selves from the *Prejudices of Education*, we shall still adhere to and be farther satisfied of most of those Truths we were then taught, as is sufficiently proved by the Experience of several thus educated,

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cated, the Certainty and Impartiality of whose Judgment, has been strengthen'd by the joint Assent of several of a *contrary Education*.

And, for a farther Illustration of this Point, should we suppose a Person *entirely ignorant* of all such Matters, but *capable* of understanding them when proposed, and one of these *moral Rules* or *Maxims* should be *barely explained* to him; without any Reasons offered to *move* or *incline* his Assent either way, I believe 'tis very difficult to imagine how *he* could judge otherwise than *we* do.

As for Example: Suppose such a Person as this was justly inform'd concerning *his own Nature*, and the *Nature of God*, and what was meant by *Worship* and all the *Notions contrary to it*, and he was ask'd which he should rather do, *perform such Acts* as would express this *Worship*, or *neglect, slight, and omit* them, or else *ridicule, dishonour, and blaspheme* that Being we call *God*: or suppose he was told what a *Parent* was, and that *such a Person* was *his Parent*, and that he was himself sensible of a great many Kindnesses he had received from him, and it was proposed to him, after a due Explication of what was meant by these things,

things, to *murder* him, *defend* him from some imminent Danger without any hazard to himself, or *stand still* and do neither ; who is there that would not believe that in *these Cases*, fairly proposed and stated, such an *unprejudiced* Person as this would not chuse to *worship his God* and *defend his Parent*?

We have therefore the *same Reason* to conclude that *moral Truths* concerning humane *Action* are *knowable the same way* that all *other Truths* are which terminate in *Speculation* only ; and that Men know *more or fewer* of them according to the different *Capacity* and *Application* of those that are employed in these Enquiries.

And as to the *Certainty* and *Evidence* of such Truths as these, 'tis, as in all other kind of Knowledge, *greater or less* according as the *Propositions* considered are *nearer* to or *farther* from the *first general Axioms* or *Rules of Morality*, from whence all the rest are deduced ; such as are those before mention'd of *seeking our own Happiness*, and *not taking away another Man's* when we cannot add any thing to our own by it, and such as immediately follow from hence, as that we ought to prefer a greater Good or Pleasure to a less, a lesser Evil or Pain to a greater, and the like, the *Evidence* of which is as
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great as of any *Metaphysical* or *Mathematical* Axioms whatever.

But the *other moral Duties* I had occasion to instance in concerning the *Worship of God, Obedience to Parents, &c.* which are *less general*, have not the *same degree of Evidence* because the *Certainty and Necessity of the Connexion* of those Actions with our own *Happiness*, which is the original Foundation of all Action and Duty, is not so *clearly discoverable* that we immediately perceive it impossible, it should be otherwise; but the *Evidence* of such Propositions as these which I have mention'd before as the *common Principles of Morality* is so great, that, when they are fairly offered to the Understanding, *without any Consideration of our own Happiness* being concern'd in them; if this may be supposed, as in several Instances no doubt it may, in such a case I say, we *cannot refuse our Assent* to them; and if so, there can be no reason assign'd why we should judge wrong when there is nothing supposed to determine the Mind either way but the *Nature of the Ideas themselves* we judge of, and *all Men* in the same Circumstances *necessarily judge the same way*; and then it follows, that *these moral Propositions* have the *same degree of Evidence* as

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any other concerning Matters of *meer Speculation*: But the *Truth or Falshood* of these former depending upon their *Connexion with our Happiness*, the *Evidence* of them, if *true*, must be the same in proportion with the *Evidence of this Connexion*.

Now the Reason we have to conclude that there is a *Connexion* betwixt *such moral Actions* and our *Happiness* so as to be firmly persuaded that the *Performance of these Actions*, which without any *visible relation to our Happiness* we prefer and approve, will be attended with *more Pleasure* and *less Pain* than *such Omissions or Actions*, which, without any *prospect of Misery*, we condemn; the reason, I say, we have thus to conclude is this: we find our selves under an *absolutely necessity of desiring and endeavouring after our own Happiness* and every thing that we know tends to it, and of *flying and avoiding* whatever we apprehend may *lessen or take it away* and put us into a *contrary State of Misery*; we find also, that *Pleasure and Pain, Happiness and Misery* are the *only Principles and Motives of Action*, and the obtaining the one, and avoiding the other, the *only Ends* of all *Endeavour and Pursuit*; and therefore, we cannot conceive it possible that Beings so made,

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of *such a Nature and Constitution* as this should be also contrived after such a manner as to be *necessarily determined* to approve those *Actions*, and judge they ought to do them, which would tend to their *Misery*, and to condemn those *Omissions and Performances*, and judge that they ought not to be guilty of them which would procure their *Happiness*.

Except then it can be proved from *Reason*, or it is some *other way* discoverable, that *acting according* to these moral Rules will certainly be attended with *more Misery* or *less Happiness* than *acting against them*, the present *Approbation* of our Judgment is a sufficient Argument that they are *true*, and that the *Observance of them* will conduce *more* to our *Happiness* than the *Neglect or Violation* of them; and if it is impossible to prove the contrary, as I think it is, and will plainly appear hereafter when I come to consider a *future State*, then are we *necessarily determin'd* to make *such Judgments* concerning our *Actions*, as I have mention'd; and if we are necessarily determin'd to judge thus, we have the *same* or *very near the same Reason* to conclude that the *Observation of such moral Rules*, or *such a particular way of acting* as our *Reason approves* will contribute *more* to our *Happiness* than that it condemns; and consequently that we are
obliged

obliged so to act; as we have to conclude that what we are necessarily determined to give or refuse our Assent to should be true or false accordingly.

For the only Standard and Criterion of Happiness as well as Truth being the original Frame and Constitution of the Mind, and the Mind being as capable of Happiness as Truth, nay, if these can be separated, and there is any Precedence of one to the other, being made first and principally for Happiness, there is as much ground to suppose that Men are not deceived when they are necessarily determined to Judge such a thing ought or ought not to be done, as when they are determined to judge such a thing is or is not; and if so, then consequently such a thing as they have thus necessarily judg'd ought or ought not to be done, will as certainly tend to their Happiness or Misery accordingly, if they act agreeably to the several Judgments they made; for otherwise they would have been deceived in so judging: and when the Mind is no other way concern'd in anything else than as it has a relation to its self, and has nothing to do to know any further, why should it not judge as truly and certainly of the Suitableness and Unsuitableness of other things to its self,

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as of their *Agreement* and *Disagreement* among one another?

Since therefore these *general Principles* or *Rules of humane action*, which are commonly lookt upon as the first *Foundations* of all *Morality* or *Duty*, are found so very agreeable to our purest and most impartial Reason, that upon a bare proposal of them, without any *perceivable relation to our Happiness* they command our *Assent* and *Approbation*, and we cannot but acknowledge that what we approve we ought to do, and what we condemn we ought not to do, it may, I think, be very fairly inferr'd from hence, that it would conduce more to our *Happiness* to act according to them than to act otherwise; and consequently, that we are really and effectually obliged, in the full extent and force of the Word, to a strict and careful Observation of these Measures in the whole Course of our Lives.

From all which it plainly appears, that the *Certainty* of these *moral Axioms* or *Propositions*, which I have placed in the second rank, falls very little short of the Evidence of those first irresistible Judgments or rather Impressions concerning our own *Happiness* which are inseparable from our Nature and from our Thoughts; for these are known

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in themselves by immediate Intuition the same way that those are; and if their Connexion with our Happiness, or with those first Propositions concerning it before mentioned, cannot properly and strictly be said to be known either by Intuition or Demonstration, yet that there is such a Connexion betwixt them, is, in the highest degree that can be, probable, or what they call morally evident. And this is the least that can be inferred from what has been alleged upon this Head: and I am very cautious of laying more stress upon any Argument than it will unquestionably bear.

2. The next Step I am to make in the Proof of Religion is, to shew that what our Reason approves or condemns, and tells us we ought or ought not to do, we are commanded by God to do or not to do, who gave us such a Nature by which we are necessarily determined to judge and be affected after such a certain manner, with that End and Design that we should act accordingly, of which End and Design he has given us several Tokens and Indications: which is a farther Confirmation that 'tis more for our Happiness to observe these Measures of acting than not; and consequently, that we are obliged by God to observe them.

That we received our *Beings*, together with all the *Powers*, *Capacities*, and whatever else belongs to them, from *God*, is very evident from the Account before given of the *Divine Nature*, and is a Truth coincident with that of our *Existence*; and therefore, when we are *necessarily determined* to judge or be affected after such a manner that 'tis plainly out of our Power to judge or be affected otherwise, we must conclude that such a *Determination* is founded in our very *Frame* and *Make*, and consequently is the *Work of God*; who, being an *intelligent* and *wise* Being, must be supposed to order every thing he makes to some *End*; and there being no *End* he can be supposed to design any thing for but that which it is capable of, and which it is peculiarly fitted to attain, what Reason can be given why we should be *capable* of such *Actions*, and *peculiarly disposed* to them by a *necessary Approbation* of them, if it was not *designed* by *God* we should act accordingly?

And farther, Since by our very *Nature* and *Constitution* we find our selves *invincibly* and *irresistibly determined* to seek and endeavour after *Happiness*, and avoid *Misery*,

fery, we have all the reason in the World to conclude, that *Happiness* is the *ultimate End* of our Being and all our Actions; and therefore, the *same God* who made us after this manner, having made it also necessary for us to approve such Actions and judge them fit to be done, and to condemn others as not fit to be done, we cannot conceive it *possible* that he should *make it necessary* for us to *aim at Happiness* in all we do, and *likewise make it necessary* for us to approve such Actions, and *judge our selves obliged* to do them as would not tend to our *Happiness*: for this is to *design and determine* us to a certain *End*, and at the same time to *make it necessary* for us to *prefer and approve* such *means* as are *contrary to it*, and to *condemn* such as would *lead us thither*; which is a perfect Contradiction to a wise Being, and *cannot* be supposed of *God*.

As therefore we have reason to be satisfied, to the Exclusion of all Doubt, from the *Natures of our selves and other things*, that, what we are necessarily determined to judge *is or is not, ought or ought not to be done*, must be in the *truth and reality of things* according as we have judg'd concerning it, because it is impossible to conceive we should be *so disposed* with relation to

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other Beings and our own Happiness, as to be under a necessity of being mistaken in the clearest and most immediate Perceptions concerning either we are capable of; so likewise when we consider our selves and all other Beings as made and contrived by God, this great Truth being allowed, we are farther and more directly convinc'd of all other Truths we find our selves necessarily determined to assent to; the Nature of God being a full and express Warrant to us that we cannot be deceived by him, and consequently that we are not mistaken in any of those Judgments which we are necessarily determined to make, because 'tis God that determines us.

But if any Suspicion of a Mistake could be entertained, there seems to be less ground for it in those Judgments in which *our Happiness is immediately concern'd* than in the Judgments we make upon things that have *no relation to us*; for 'tis more reasonable to think God should make us after such a manner that 'twas necessary for us to judge wrong in Matters, where the Consequences would be the same to us whether we judg'd right or not, or were wholly ignorant of them, than to imagine that he should purposely determine us to judge wrong

wrong where *Happiness* and *Misery* depend upon our Judgment.

Thus it appears that God did *design* to oblige us to such a particular way of acting or living, from the *general Consideration* of the *Nature of Man*, whereby he is *necessarily determined* to approve some Actions and to condemn others, and to judge thus of himself that he *ought to do* what he so approves, and that he *ought not to do* what he condemns: and therefore we are *obliged* to obey the *Commands of God* and our *Nature*, and pursue our own *Happiness* by the *Directions* God has given us, and in the *Way and Method* he has pointed out to us.

But, besides the exprefs Judgment of our *Reason*, which he has set as a certain unerring Guide to lead us to Him and *Happiness*, he has given us several *other Tokens and Indications* of his Design and our Duty, both in the *Frame and Disposition* of our *Minds*, and in the *Oeconomy and Constitution of Humane Society*.

And first, as to the *Frame and Disposition of our Mind*; he has not only given us such *Capacities and Powers* whereby we are enabled to know and perform such Actions

as

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as he requires of us, but he has made us sensible of all our Obligations by giving us such *Inclinations* and *Propensions* to those particular Actions he has design'd to oblige us to, that, as soon as ever any Occasion offers it self, we immediately close with it, so that the Action prevents all the Exercise of our Reason, or at least is so quick, that we are not sensible of any antecedent Judgment or Deliberation concerning it.

Thus upon the receipt of any considerable Kindness, we presently find our Souls *ready* and *disposed* to all the Acts of Love and Esteem we are capable of; and, *without considering* that this is a likely way of procuring more Advantage to our selves by engaging the good Opinion of all that are Witnesses of those Returns we make, we *immediately* break out into all the external Actions that are any ways expressive of a grateful Sense of Mind. So, in like manner, when by Reasoning, Information, or any visible Indications of Power, we are induced to believe that such or such a Being is able, at his Pleasure, to contribute very much to our well or ill Being, Happiness, or Misery, as soon as ever we are satisfied of this, we are *immediately conscious* of all those different Sentiments of Love
Fear,

Fear, and Reverence, and a Disposition to do what we think most agreeable to the Will of such a Being; and our outward Behaviour is suitable to these inward Sentiments *without any express Consideration* that we shall thereby recommend our selves to this Being, and dispose him to make use of his Power in our Favour only, and not to our Disadvantage.

Now 'tis plain, that in both these Cases our Actions are not the *Effects of pure Reason only*, tho' upon Examination they are found to be exactly agreeable to it; for besides that upon the strictest Observation of what passes within us, we are not sensible in these Instances of those Steps and Degrees which we are conscious of in all manner of *reasoning*, and which distinguish this Operation of the Soul both from *Intuition* and *Sensation*; nor do by *Intuition* perceive a *necessary and immediate Connexion* betwixt *these Actions* and *our own Happiness*; besides all this, I say, if we acted by *reason only*, what need would there be of those *previous Sentiments* we feel? We might perform all the *outward Actions* upon a *bare rational Prospect* of the Advantages we were likely to procure to our selves by them: but, if we look into our selves, we shall
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be convinced that we *cannot help having* those *Sentiments* we feel upon such Occasions, that we do *not reason* our selves into them, and, if by the Unhappiness of our Temper, or any other way, we should want these Sentiments of Gratitude, Reverence, or the like, we should find some difficulty in reasoning our selves into the *same outward Behaviour* as would have followed, if we had been *so affected*; and, tho' we were never so well convinced that *our Happiness* was really concern'd in such a Behaviour, all our Actions would come *slower*, be performed with *more Constraints*, and *less Conformity* to one another, than if they had proceeded from a *lively natural Sense*, till *Habit*, which is another additional help to *Reason*, had given us greater Ease and Dispatch.

And thus we should find our selves *originally made* and *disposed* with respect to all the *general Duties* of *Morality* and *Religion*, if we entred upon a particular Examination of our *whole Frame* and *Constitution*: from whence we may conclude, that these *natural* and *original Inclinations* and *Propensions* to some Actions, and *Restraints* from and *Aversions* to others, which we feel in our selves without being conscious of any *pre-vious*

vious Deliberation concerning the Reasonableness or Unreasonableness of what we do, or, after Judgments of this Nature made, we look upon as certain Motions of the Soul carrying us on to act according to such Judgments with more Ease, Quickness, and Application of Mind than we should have done upon the bare Conviction of our Reason without them: All these Dispositions, I say, and Sentiments of the Soul being given us by God, and assisting us conformably to the Dictates of our Reason in discharging what we call the Duties of Religion, we have sufficient Cause from hence to conclude, that God did design us for the Practice of such Duties, and consequently, that an obedient Compliance with this Design will contribute more to our Happiness than our Disobedience can; which is a farther Proof that we are actually under Obligations to God, or that there really is such a thing as Religion.

Which Obligations, together with God's Right of obliging, we are constantly put in mind of by the Oeconomy and Constitution of Humane Society, and the several Relations in it.

The different kinds of Government and Subjection to be found in the World, are the
chiefest

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chiefest Marks and Characters by which Men are distinguish'd from one another in *Society*; these take up a large share in their Thoughts and Discourses, and a great part of their Actions are influenc'd and determined by the Notions and Opinions they have of them; all which do lead us to acknowledge that we are under *higher Obligations* of Obedience to God than we can be to any *humane Governour* whatsoever; for, whether we consider our selves as *Servants, Children, or Subjects*, or any other way *inferiour* to others, whatever Reasons we alledge for *our Duty* and Obedience to *Masters, Parents, or Princes*, or for *their Right of commanding us*, they will conclude *mere strongly* upon us when we consider our selves *with relation to God*.

Now all the *Reasons and Grounds* of our Obedience to Men, and of *their right of obliging us*, are *Power Goodness and Property*. When a person has a *Power* of contributing to my *Happiness or Misery*, and I do, some way or other, *belong to him*, so as to be call'd *his*, I look upon my self as *obliged to obey him* or act according to his Will; and if, besides his having this *Power and Property*, I consider him as *more inclinable to do me good than ill*, I conceive my self under *higher*

higher Obligations of Obedience to him.

But God has *all these Titles* to our Obedience in the *highest degree possible*, for, by giving us our *intire Being* and every thing that belongs to our Nature, 'tis plain that he has not only a *greater Power of contributing to our Happiness or misery* than any man can have, but also a *greater Property* in us by this *Act of Creation or Production* than can accrue to any Man by *Conquest Purchase, Covenant, Generation*, or any other way whereby Men come to have a *Property* in one another. And that he has *more Goodness* towards us, or is *more inclinable* to contribute to our *Happiness* than *Misery*, is manifest from his *own Nature enjoying Happiness*, and that other Character of it, his *Wisdom* in designing every thing for the best Ends they are capable of, as also from the *Benefits* we have already received from him.

The inference I draw him from hence is, that, as *our Reason and Judgment* which tell us what ought or ought not to be done, and *natural Inclinations and Aversions* preventing or seconding our Reason, but always conformably to it, which dispose us to action, were given us by God with a design of engaging us to act accordingly.

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so were we put into such a *State* and *Condition* with regard to one another, that the necessary Relations resulting from Society might put us in mind of our relation to God, and the proper peculiar Actions consequent upon it; so that by a *constant traditional Education* in the exercise of these Duties of Subjection of different sorts to one another, we should be led to the Acknowledgment of our Obligations to a *Superior Being* more easily than if every Man had been left to himself to find them out by the use of *his own Faculties only*, without these particular *Occasions* of setting his *Reason* and *Inclinations* on work.

All which Considerations concerning the *State of humane Nature and Society*, are at least *very probable* Arguments that we are *actually obliged* by God to such a particular way of living as we call *Religion*; and consequently, we have Reason to conclude that a careful *practice of Religion*, all things considered, will contribute *more* to our *Happiness* than a *Neglect* or *Transgression* of it, because the same God who designs us for *Happiness* designs us also for the *Practice of the Duties of Religion*, tho' we do not yet perceive an *immediate Connexion* betwixt *Religion* and *Happiness*; which is the next thing to be proved.

3. In the third place then I shall give some *positive* and *direct* Proof from the *Nature of Religion it self*, that a *regular Practice* of all those *Duties* or *Obligations* of which it consists would certainly conduce to the *greatest Happiness* Man is capable of, considered only in his *present Condition*, as included within the *Bounds of this Life*.

'Tis plainly perceived upon a short transient View and Comparison of the *Human* and *Divine* natures that *Man* was made and designed by *God* for *Happiness*; and we are more nearly and necessarily convinc'd by the *irresistible Desires of Happiness*, and *Aversions to Misery* we Experience in our selves, and by our *constant unalterable Endeavours* to attain the one and avoid the other, that the *Enjoyment* of the purest most unallayed *Happiness* we are capable of must be the *ultimate End* of our *Being* and all our *actions*.

Since therefore *God* has made us capable of, and designed us for such an *End*, and we find our selves necessarily determined to aim at this *End*; since the only way of attaining this *End* is by our *Actions*, and we are assured by Experience that all our *Actions*

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do not lead to this End, but *Misery* as well as *Happiness* may be the *Effect* and *Consequence* of our Actions, it follows from hence, that there must be *one particular way of acting*, which, if steadily pursued, will certainly procure us *greater Happiness* than we can possibly attain by *any other*.

And farther, if we are *designed for Happiness*, and this Happiness be attainable only by one particular way of acting, 'tis certain that the same God who designed us for such an End must design also that we should *act such a particular way* as would conduct us thither.

In Conformity to which Designs, we cannot but believe that, as he has given us a *certain Knowledge* of and *necessary Determinations* toward our End, he must have given us also *sufficient Tokens* and *Indications* of the *Means* that lead to it; and, upon Examination we are satisfied that he has so, *by framing our Minds after such a manner* that we are necessarily determined to approve some Actions and to condemn others, and to judge our selves obliged to do what we approve, and to avoid what we condemn; by *giving us such natural Propensions and Aversions* agreeable to the Judgments of our Reason, as by a sudden and unperceivable

ceivable Influence dispose us to, and assist us in the Performance of the same Actions which Reason prescribes; and by *putting us into such a state or condition of Life* with respect to one another, where the different kinds of Government and Subjection, and the Notions and Actions resulting from thence unavoidably lead us to the Acknowledgment of God's Superiority, Power, and Right of obliging, and the Necessity of our Obedience to him, in all the several Instances of Duty, in which we conceive our selves bound to any governing Relation among Men, but in a higher and more exalted manner, as becomes the mighty Inequality between *God and Man*.

From whence we are farther led to conclude that *all other Duties* and Obligations we apprehend our selves under, with respect to *our selves or others*, are the Effect of our *Obligation to God the Supreme Governour of the World*, whose *Power and Right* are over *all things*, *original and independent*; and all *other Powers and Rights* are derived from and dependent upon him; the Sense of which Obligation makes all our Actions that are duely influenced by it termed *Religious*, tho' God is not the *immediate Object* of them.

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And these are sufficient Marks and Evidences to assure us that *God* does *require* us to act such a particular way, and consequently that we *are actually obliged* to frame our Lives according to those Rules and Measures which come under the Name of *Religion*, unless it can be shewn from *more certain Discoveries* of the *Nature of Man* and the *Design of God*, that notwithstanding all these fair Appearances, *Religion* is not the *Way to Happiness*. But, as 'tis manifest from what we have already observed of the *Nature of God* and *our own Frame* and Constitution, that no higher Assurances can be given us of the Truth of any thing than we have had in this matter from a Concurrence of our *Reason*, *natural Inclinations*, and *external Condition*, and that we cannot be deceived in assenting to such Testimony; so, upon farther Experiences and Observations taken from our selves and the State of Mankind with relation to Religion, we shall find that *Religion* is in *its own Nature* so fitted and suited to the *Nature of Man*, so proportion'd to the *original Dispositions* and *Desires of the Soul*, as by a proper Tendency and Efficacy to promote his *Happiness*.

This

This appears first by what we feel in our selves. What just and impartial *Reason* approves we find a *Pleasure* in approving; *Inclination* superadded to Judgment heightens the pleasing Sentiment; acting what *Nature* inclines to and *Reason* warrants, is accompanied with a new and higher Satisfaction, all which we repeat and enjoy over again upon *Reflexion*. And, if any *Pain* or *Uneasiness* mixes with the Pleasure, or attends it, that does not arise from the same Thoughts or Actions that this does, but from a contrary Application of Mind in our selves or others, which opposes and obstructs us in the Practice of Religion, or from some other extrinsical Cause that has no Dependence upon or Connexion with Religion; so that the due Performance of any Religious Action is never properly the Cause of any Pain or Trouble to him that performs it, however in some Instances it may seem to be the Occasion of it.

But, in order to be farther satisfied of the natural Connexion betwixt Religion and Happiness, and that we may more clearly perceive that the latter is the true and genuine Effect of the former, we should take off our Thoughts from the present State of

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Mankind, and represent to our selves *another Generation* of Men. living together in a *constant regular Observance* of all the *Duties* and *Obligations* of Religion: for there we should behold such a glorious Scene of Happiness rising before us, that, considering the *necessary Circumstances* of our mortal Condition, we could not possibly imagine or form an Idea of any thing in this Life beyond it.

This would be a State of *universal Peace*, *Safety*, *Tranquility*, and *Love*; where there would be no *Injuries* nor *Tears*, no *Envy* nor *Distrust*; where every Man would find all the Pleasures of Friendship in the Company of every Man, and feel his own agreeable Thoughts towards others redoubled by knowing that they had all the same Sentiments for him: In such a State as this all the *natural Appetites* and *Desires* of the Soul would be *satisfied*, without a painful Eagerness in the Pursuit, or Satiety in the Enjoyment; and there would be no *irregular imaginary Desires* to create the Uneasiness of *Disappointment*: then every Man would be *pleased with all he did*, and have his Satisfaction heightened by a full and entire Assurance that his Actions were *approved by the World*, and *acceptable to God*.

Was

Was true Religion so universally and exactly practised among Men, they would engage the Power and Wisdom of the Supreme Governour in their Favour by the Honour, Respect, and Obedience they paid him; they would be sure of all the Benefits and Advantages of humane Strength and Skill by a mutual Performance of all the Duties of Society; and by an equal regular Conduct and Management of their own particular Capacities and Powers, they would preserve themselves in the fittest and properest Condition of enjoying those agreeable Satisfaction God had put within their Reach, and prolong the Enjoyment of them by continuing their Lives to the utmost Term they could, by any Endeavours of their own, carry them to.

Whoever takes a full and distinct View of Religion, in all its Power and Extent, must acknowledge that these are the true and necessary Effects of it, where its Influence is freely dispensed, without Check or Opposition from contrary Causes. And what greater Happiness than this can we, without a larger Date of present Life or a prospect of another, conceive our selves capable of? or, at least, is attainable by any other Actions besides those of Religion?

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But this, I confess, is all but an *imaginary Scene*, a *bare Idea* or *Pattern* drawn by the *Mind*, which never was, and perhaps never will be exemplified *in the reality of things*: and therefore it does not necessarily follow from hence that, when the *Generality of Men* act *contrary to Religion*, as now they do, *those few* that are mixt with them, and live *exactly according to the Rules and Precepts of it*, shall enjoy more *Happiness* than any of the rest, much less *such* whose *Practice is inconstant and defective*, which is certainly the *Case of the best and most careful Observers of those measures of acting which Religion prescribes*.

However, thus much, I think, may justly be inferr'd, That *Religion is in its own Nature productive of Happiness* and nothing else, and consequently was *design'd and ordain'd by God* that it should obtain this Effect.

From whence I conclude, that if *Man was made for Happiness*, and *directed and disposed to seek it by the means of Religion*, and these means are found to be in *their own Nature sufficient*, but are some way or other, without the Fault of the Person that uses them, *render'd ineffectual for the present*; from hence, I say, we may certainly

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conclude that *God*, who in his great Wisdom has order'd all these things, did not order them in vain, or with an Intention of deceiving; but has *contrived it so*, that *some time or other* the *End* to which they all point shall be *obtained*; and therefore, if a *full and exact* Observance of *all* the Duties of Religion be not attended with a suitable Happiness *in this Life*, 'tis a strong Proof that there will be a *future State*, in which there will be Rewards answerable to the highest Performances and Expectations.

We have Reason also, from the *Goodness* and *Wisdom* of God, to hope, that the *sincere Endeavours* of those, whose Course is sometimes interrupted with voluntary Transgressions of the Rules prescribed them, will notwithstanding, by some *Favour or Grace*, procure them a *State of Happiness*. But this we may be sure of, that God will put a *mighty Distinction* betwixt such as *do but sometimes* deviate from those *religious measures* they have proposed to themselves, and those who *constantly* act by *different Principles*.

4. The Proof of this Conclusion is the fourth thing I proposed in order to the
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Establishment of the *Truth* and *Necessity* of *Religion*. Here then I am to shew, that the *Defect* of a *general* and *regular* Practice of Religion, and the *Consequences* of this Defect, do necessarily lead us to the Acknowledgment of such a *future State* as is sufficient to determine us to prefer one particular way of Life before another, upon such Reasons and Motives, that is, such degrees of *Happiness* and *Misery*, as we are sure greater and more powerful cannot be offered to us.

'Tis very plain, that Religion is not *universally* practised in the World, nor do the *generality* of any *Nation* or *Society* of Men make their Duty to God the governing Principle of their Actions. 'Tis manifest likewise, that *those few* who are *sensible* of *their Obligations*, and endeavour to discharge them, do in many Instances neglect them, or *act contrary* to them: upon which Accounts it happens, that as there is a great deal more Misery in the World than our mortal Condition would otherwise subject us to, so it oftentimes falls to the *religious Man's* Lot to have the *greatest* share of it.

Nor is all the Trouble and Uneasiness he suffers the Effect of *vicious Habits* and *Impressions*

pressions mixing with, and obstructing the Performance of his Duty, or carrying him to contrary Actions, tho' very much is owing to this Cause, but a great many Afflictions and Calamities are laid upon him by the Malice and Hatred of wicked Men *purely for his being religious*; so that, did he *perfectly* and compleatly fulfil all his Duty to God, there's Reason to believe his *Misery* would be proportionably *encreased* as far as it was in their Power to do it.

From whence it plainly follows, that God has provided some *other state of Happiness* for such as live *exactly* according to his Purpose and Intention *here*; which will be so full and sufficient a Recompence for all the Misery they have suffered in this Life, as to justify their Obedience to God upon such Terms.

For, if God *design'd Man for Happiness*, as 'tis certain he did, and *appointed Religion* to be the *means* to it, as manifestly appears from his annexing Pleasure to the purest and most unmixt practice of it, as well as from several other Indications, 'tis impossible to suppose that God should suffer his Ends to be *defeated* after a due and proper Use of the means, by the *derived dependent Power and Contrivance of other Beings*,

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ings, and order it so, that those who were *most diligent and exact* in observing the truest measures of acting, should, *for that very reason*, meet with the *least Success*.

Should we therefore suppose a *few perfectly religious* afflicted and tormented by wicked Men barely *upon that account*, as there can be no other, if they are what we suppose them to be; we must then conclude that God has *mighty Blessings in store* for them, in comparison of which their *present Sufferings are as nothing*.

From hence also we may infer, that those whose *sincere Resolutions* and *Endeavours* are not attended with *exact and universal Performance*, and yet, who are rendered *more miserable* by the Actions of wicked men than they otherwise would have been for the sake of those degrees of Religion they come up to; 'tis reasonable, I say, to conclude that those will, *some time or other*, receive *more Happiness* or *less Misery* than others proportionably to the difference of their *Obedience* and *Affliction now*: For, according as they have pursued the Means, so will their Attainments of the End be; or, if no Reward be due but to a *full Discharge* of all *Obligations*, it cannot be imagin'd, that those who have Perform'd some part of what they were obli-

obliged to, and endeavoured at *general Obedience* should be punished as high as those who have been guilty of a *greater* or of a *total Neglect, Contempt, or Volation* of their Duty.

However therefore it be as to the *manner of it*, 'tis very agreeable to the *Wisdom and Designs of God*, according to all the Indications he has given to Mankind of them, to make the Condition of those who act by the *Principles of Religion* preferable, to that of others who act by *contrary Measures*, which it would not always be, was there no other *State of Life* after *this* is ended.

From all which it plainly follows that there must be a *Future State* in which Men will be distinguish'd from one another by *different degrees of Happiness and Misery* according to the *different regard* they had to *Religion in this Life*.

The Certainty, of which State we are farther convinced of by the general *Wants, Miseries, and Imperfections* of our present Nature, which proceed from some Principle or Disposition within us, contrary to that of Religion; which Principle or Disposition is the *Reason* of that *universal Wickedness* which reigns in the World.

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Did Mankind enjoy all the Happiness they were otherwise capable of in this *mortal Condition*, yet, so long as they found in themselves *Capacities* and *Desires* of *greater* unknown degrees of Pleasure, which from the present Frame and Constitution of things they had no Hope or Prospect of, and felt an *Uneasiness* at the Thoughts of *parting* with those Enjoyments they were *possess'd* of, by the unalterable Decree of *Death*, which they knew themselves subject to; were they I say in such a Condition, they would have great Reason from hence to conclude, that God did design them for some other *more perfect* State, where their *whole Capacities* would be filled, *all their Desires* satisfyed, and *no kind of Pain* or *Uneasiness* check or allay the *Fullness* of *that joy*: not that they had then any cause of Complaint, as if God had not dealt kindly by them, in granting them *lesser degrees* of Happiness than what they were *capable of*; but because, in such a case as is supposed, their *Capacities* and *Desires* would be given them *in vain*; which does not seem consistent with the *Wisdom* of God; and moreover the *Uneasiness* of *Desiring* what was *impossible* and the painful *Fears* and *Apprehensions* of what was certain, which they

they would then experience, would appear *inconsistent* with God's Design of making Man for Happiness; and therefore t'would be more agreeable to all the Notions we have of God, and all the Observations we have made upon his other Works, to suppose that, had *this Life* been the Extent of Mans Being and Happiness, God would not have given him a sense or prospect of any other: upon such a Supposition as this 'tis highly rational to think that *constant even Contentment* would have bounded all his Thoughts, that his Soul would always have remained at the *same equal Poize*, and that he would have lived without desiring more than he enjoyed, and died without any previous Fears of losing that.

And, if there is good ground to believe that there would be a State of future Happiness tho' Men enjoyed all they were capable of here according to the present Circumstances of their Nature and Condition, because their Happiness here was not compleat by reason of some Pain and Uneasiness mixt with it, and because their Capacities and Desires exceeded all their actual Enjoyments; how much more reasonable is it to make the same Conclusion now when we, every way, fall so short of the Happiness the condi-

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condition of *this Life* would allow us, as will plainly appear if we compare the present State of the World with that Draught and Representation we have before given of Humane Life under a regular Practice of the Duties of Religion.

We are now not only conscious in general of larger Capacities, of Happiness than what we enjoy; but there are several kinds and degrees of it within our Knowledge and seemingly within our Reach and Power, which, with all the Endeavours we can use we are not able to attain; and the more Wants we are sensible of, and the better and more particularly we know what they are, the stronger are our Desires and the greater the Uneasiness of Defeats and Disappointments, which Experience assures us, are very frequent; The Satisfaction we meet with are commonly very short and mixed with Pain, and we have a great many other things to fear besides *death*.

But the Troubles and *Calamities* of *Humane Life* are too well known to need being insisted upon, and too large a subject to be particularly treated of in this place. 'Tis sufficient to my purpose to remark in general what I think may very safely be affirmed, that, if what falls to every Man's share

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was fairly computed, the *Misery* of the *greatest* part of Mankind would out-weigh their *Happiness*.

If therefore *Man* was design'd by *God* for *Happiness*, and was so framed that he cannot enjoy compleat *Happiness* in this *Life* without a mixture of *Uneasiness*, and yet has *Capacities* and *Desires* of greater than he can conceive belonging to his *Nature* and the necessary *Circumstances* of it here; and farther if Mankind be now involv'd in such a *State* or *Condition* of *Life* in which they all actually enjoy much less *Happiness* than they find themselves by *Nature* capable of here, and the *greatest* part of them have a larger *Share* of the *Troubles* than the *Advantages* of *Life*; from hence I think it may be truly and certainly inferr'd, that there will be another *State* of pure compleat *Happiness*, answerable at least to the highest *Notions* and *Conceptions* we are able to frame of it.

But since, as has before been proved, *God* has not absolutely and unconditionally determin'd all *Men* to be happy, but has made *Happiness* and *Misery* to depend upon our *Actions*, and consequently has annex'd *Happiness* to a particular way of acting, we have all the Reason in the *World* to believe that the *Happiness* of another *State*

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will be the Portion of *those, and those only, who live according to the Rules of Religion here*; and this, I believe, no body is disposed to doubt of that owns a *future State*, and therefore I shall spend no time in an unnecessary Proof of it.

And, if there are none to be found that *exactly discharge all the Obligations of Religion*, yet 'tis more agreeable to our Reason to conclude that those who *sincerely endeavour to do it*, shall by the especial *Grace and Favour of God*, in some such way or manner as to his Wisdom shall seem fit, be rendred *capable of future Happiness*, than to believe that *all Mankind shall be miserable*, and none obtain Happiness, contrary to all the Marks and Indications of the *Design of God in making Man*.

Granting therefore what I think has been sufficiently proved under this Head, that there will be a *future State* in which all Men will be *happy or miserable*, according as they have behaved themselves here, with regard to what we call *Religion*: this I say being allowed, it manifestly follows from hence that it is *more for our Happiness to act up to the Rules and Directions of Religion*, than to pursue any other Measures, whatever we should happen to suffer in
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this Life for so doing; because the Happiness of a future State will so far outweigh all the sufferings of this, that when we come to enjoy it we shall be forced to acknowledge, that the end and reward of our Labours was very well worth all the Troubles and Difficulties we found in the way to it; and if it be *absolutely, with regard to the whole extent and duration of our Being*, more for our Happiness to live Religiously than otherwise, then are we in the highest and strictest sense *obliged* to live so, which was the thing I undertook to prove.

Nay further, if besides the *natural Pleasure* which results from *Religious Acts* while we are practising them here, God has given us a *certain Prospect* and well grounded *Hope* of a State, of greater *Bliss* hereafter, I dare venture to assert that *generally speaking*, Religion will prove the *surest way to Happiness even in this Life*; so that, tho' sometimes the *Sufferings* of some particular Men upon that account, may exceed all the noble *Satisfactions* Religion can afford them here, yet all things consider'd, and the different *Methods* of acting weigh'd together with all the probable *Consequences* that, according to the common course of things, may attend them, there will be sufficient

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reason for a wise Man to prefer the practise of Religious Duties to the ways of Irreligion upon the score of the *present Happiness* he is very like to enjoy by that means, reckoning in the *Hopes* and *prospect only* and not the *Possession of another State*: as will more plainly appear under the next General Head of Discourse:

Which is a Proof of *Religion* from a Comparison of it with *Irreligion*, and the necessary Consequences arising from thence.

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III. I have before given a *positive direct* proof of Religion, from *certain Principles* drawn from the *natures and relations* of the *Beings* concerned in it. I shall now endeavour to make good the same Truth, by shewing what *Absurd* and *Unreasonable* things would follow from a *denial of Religion*, and how *Pernicious* and *Destructive* to Mankind, the establishment of a contrary Belief and Practice would be.

In the management of which Subject, I shall first consider the *several Steps* and *Degrees of Irreligion*, and then shew how far they all lead to the same Ends, and what are the peculiar Consequences of each.

Irreligion, so far as it consists in *Opinion* or *Belief*, is of three Sorts: For either men deny the *being of a God*, and consequently all Religious Duty falls a course by the taking away the Foundation of it; or they acknowledg a God, but deny that *Man* is *any ways Obliged by him*, to act such a particular way as we pretend

he is; or else they own they are in several Instances obliged to Worship God, and to live according to those rational Principles of Action we have before mentioned, but do not believe *there is any future State of Rewards and Punishments after this Life.*

Now these are very different Notions considered barely in themselves as matters of *Speculation* only; but, if we examine the *practical Effects and Consequences* of them, we shall find that they all aim at the *same thing* though several ways: which is the establishing a *general liberty of Living as every man pleases*, upon Principles contrary to those of Religion.

This is plain of the two first Opinions, which *take away all manner of Religious obligation*, and upon strict examination, will be found to be True of the last; which so far *Loosens and Weakens the Influence of Religion*, that it will not be able to bear up against the force of contrary Motives to Action.

But let us consider these Notions apart, and then we shall the better perceive what the *direct, and immediate Consequences* of each

each Opinion are, and how far they fall in with one another.

First then, we will suppose that there is no God, and Consequently no Religion: this being supposed, what are we to think of our Selves? What kind of Beings are we? How came we first to exist, and what are we to do while we continue to be?

That we are, and that we feel our selves so and so Affected 'tis impossible to doubt: and among the several things that I am infallibly Conscious of, I perceive such an Agreement and Connexion betwixt some of them, that, let me do what I can, I cannot help perceiving them as together: and such a disagreement betwixt others, that I cannot help perceiving them as asunder, or separate from one another. These Complex Perceptions or Appearances, I am assured of the same way, I am assured of my own Being, or any simple Perception whatsoever: but if these things, which I necessarily perceive as together or asunder, and cannot possibly perceive otherwise, should not be Joyned or Separated accordingly in the Nature and Reality of things, but only in the Mind: then do I know nothing

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certain beyond Appearances and the Affections of my own Mind, and yet am invincibly Disposed to believe what may be False, with so strong an assent, that 'tis the hardest thing in the World to command my self to entertain the least Suspicion of a bare possibility of its Falshood, as any man may experience in himself, if he will but try to Doubt of what we call a self-evident Proposition; which is the reason that there are so few that pretend to be thorough Scepticks if there ever were really any such, which I dare confidently affirm there never were. But if it were possible that I could prevail with my Self to deny the Being of a God. after a full and impartial Consideration of the Proof before given of this Truth, I do not see where my Doubts could stop, or what could determine my Assent to any thing else. Reason, Truth and Evidence would be bare uninforming Sounds, which would cause no other Perceptions in me; my whole Life would be nothing but Suspence and Amazement; Darknes and Ignorance would cover my Understanding, and continual Uneasiness would arise from a restless Succession of vain undetermin'd Thoughts.

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If therefore there *be no God*, notwithstanding all those *appearances of Evidence* that there is such a Being, we have the same Reason to distrust *all our other Knowledge*. And a continual desire of Knowing, with a constant agitation of Thoughts in the search or pursuit of Knowledge, joyn'd with a continual distrust of all appearances of Truth, without any manner of Rest or Acquiescence, which we should then feel in our Selves, would be such an uneasie State as no man, I believe, could bear; and, I believe, no man ever yet felt; and yet this would be the consequence of the denial of a God, supposing there is the *same appearance of Evidence* for his *Being* as we have for *any other Truth*, as those that have fully examined the proofs of it must Acknowledg.

But this perhaps is too much to suppose, it being very easie to imagine, that there may be men who deny the *Being of God* and *all manner of Religion*, without distrusting their *other Knowledge*; who in all other matters, Argue from the same Principles, and Act by the same Rules as the rest of Mankind do. Tis very possible, that persons who never gave them-

selves the trouble of being acquainted with *Mathematicks*, may think all the Demonstrations there pretended to false, and the whole Science a Cheat, without calling in question any other parts of Knowledge they have happen'd to be conversant in: and much more conceivable is it that such as never duly and fairly considered the Arguments for *God* and *Religion*, should deny both without distrusting their Faculties upon other Occasions; which is certainly the case of all that pretend to such a denial.

Now in applying my self to these men, I do not think it sufficient to alledge that the Proof I have given of these great Truths, is *directly* and *immediately* drawn from *such Principles* as they own, and make use of in other matters, though this may certainly be affirm'd; to alledge this is not sufficient, because, they may have that easie answer ready which all people give that are fond of their Opinions, and impatient of enquiry into things they would not have otherwise than as they now believe them; thus, I say, they would be apt to answer; That Arguments drawn out to any length are
very

very Uncertain; there may be a Mistake in some part of the Deduction; and consequences, at a great distance from their *first Principles*, may not have all *their* Force and Strength convey'd to them; and so, though the *whole Contexture* of the Proof seems specious, there's no reason to quit such Opinions they are fully perswaded of, for others that they certainly perceive to be False, though they are set out so plausibly, that they cannot tell how to assign the particular Falshood of them.

Since therefore the Persons that *deny the Being of God and Religion*, are not well acquainted with what they deny; have very imperfect Notions of these things, and do not trouble themselves to look into them, or consider the Proofs brought for them; but yet are supposed to understand the *contrary Opinions*, which they profess to be so well perswaded of, and to act by; it cannot but be very proper to discourse with them concerning *their own Persuasions*, and supposing *their Principles* true, consider them in their full Extent, and examine into the genuine consequences of them: and, if when I have given a *true Idea and Representation of Irreligion*,

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they will own this to be their Faith still, I desire no better Witnesses to confirm the Truth of what I have urg'd in the Defence of *Religion*.

Supposing then that *there is no God nor Religion*, and that we must judge and act as our Reason prescribes we should upon such a Supposition, these two things do necessarily and immediately follow :

1. That *all Men are equal*, and there is no such thing as *Superiority, Right, or Authority* of any kind.

2. That *every Man* is to act as he himself shall judge most convenient for his own particular *Happiness*.

1. That *all Men are equal* is very plain if we consider the *Original Capacities and Powers* of Human Nature, without any external Advantages of *Birth, Education* and *Society*: nor do these Differences, without a God, cause any such *Inequality* betwixt particular Men, as to make one Man *subject* to another, or lay any *Obligation* upon the one to act according to the other's Will.

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There needs no further Proof of this but to consider, That there's no Man, whatsoever his Circumstances in the World are, can have such a *certain uncontrollable Power* over another as to make it *necessary* for him to approve or prefer such a particular way of acting which he prescribes: For, whatever a Man promises or threatens, be it never so great in either kind, may, by some sudden unforeseen Accident, be hindred from taking effect, even in the moment of Execution; besides, whatever is promised or threatned, being certainly of no longer continuance than Life, be it never so great in it self, it may not, oftentimes, countervail some other Motive the Person thus accosted is govern'd by. There may be some particular Enjoyment he is possess'd of, which his Imagination has so heightned, or Habit has made so necessary to him, that nothing pleasant or grievous in Life can be of weight enough to determine him to a contrary Choice.

Thus have we seen Men of *no Religion* sacrifice all they had, and bear all that could be inflicted upon them, rather than

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than renounce their *Ambition* or *Revenge*, or do any thing that they thought would stain the *Reputation* or *Glory* their former Actions had procured them.

From whence it follows, That, *without a God*, no Man can have a *true Right of obliging* another; the *Right of obliging* being founded in *such a Power* of contributing to the *Happiness* or *Misery* of another, as his *Reason* must necessarily submit to when 'tis made use of.

It may indeed so happen, sometimes, by the favour of particular Circumstances, that a Man may propose to me to act after such a manner, upon *such probable Motives and Reasons*, as I may judge it *very likely* that it should conduce *more to my Happiness* to act *thus* than *otherwise*; but this is not sufficient to give any particular Man, or kind of Men a *Right* to my Obedience, because I can never be *sure* of their *Power* of enforcing these *Motives*: and therefore, tho I do find the World at present so constituted, that Men of such a *Character* or *Relation* have *more probable* Opportunities of contributing to my *Happiness* or *Misery* than others, I am not to look upon them as
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having any *Right* or *Authority* over me; but such whose Wills and Counsels I follow oftner than those of others, because I judge it *more for my Interest* so to do: but when I judge it more for my particular Interest to follow my own or any other *Man's*, then am I *as much obliged* to act accordingly; and in such a case, I have *as true a Right of my own*, or the Person whose Advice I take has *as much Right and Authority* over me as my *Father, Master or Prince*.

All which *Titles* and *Relations*, and whatever else are used to imply *Govern-ment* and *Subjection*, if there be *no God*, are *false imposing Names*; and, if any Advantage has been taken in our Infancy to convey any *Notions of Authority, Duty or Obligation* by them, we are to shake off *all these Prejudices*, as well as *those concerning God and Religion*, which have been made use of, no doubt, for the better impressing and enforcing *these* upon us.

We must discard likewise those other false *Notions of Right and Property*; by the means of which some Men challenge to themselves larger Shares and Portions
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of the necessary Supports and Advantages of Life than the rest of Mankind, for which there is no manner of Ground *in reason*: For all Men being equal, they have all an equal Right and Title to every Thing they are capable of enjoying or possessing; nor can any Priority of Possession, any Pains or Labour of Acquisition, any Promise, Contract or Agreement whatsoever be sufficient to found a Right or Property in any thing to the Exclusion of any other Man: which will appear very plainly if we consider,

2. The second Consequence arising from the Supposition of *no God nor Religion*, which is this, That every particular Man is to act as *he himself* shall judge most convenient for his own particular Interest or Happiness.

There's no other Principle, Reason or Motive of Action imaginable in such a case. And, if all Men do and must act according to this Principle, they must also, if they will be consistent with themselves, judge that there is no such thing as Authority or Duty, Right or Property, or any thing else commonly thought to be

of Religion in General. 161

be the *Causes* of them, *implied in them*; or to *result from them*, that is, That there can be *no Action* of their own or other *Mens*, or *any other Circumstance* or *Relation* whatsoever, that can be any bar or hindrance to any Man's Endeavours of bettering his Condition, or advancing his Happiness, *when and in what manner soever* he shall think fit.

Now, that this is *the necessary and only Principle* such Persons as deny the *Being of God and Religion* can be influenc'd by in their Actions is very plain, if we consider these two things, which, as has before been shewn, *Reason and Experience* assure us of:

First, That we are *naturally and necessarily determined* to seek and endeavour after our own Happiness, whether there be a *God or no*, or whatever other *Notions* we have of things.

Secondly, That, if *there be no God*, no Man can be conceived to have such a *Preeminence of Power* above another, that, if *he will*, *he can certainly* contribute so far to his Happiness or Misery, that it must needs be *unavoidably* better for him to act that particular way *he prescribes*

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cribes than any other, and that the Person thus *prescribed* to cannot possibly help judging so.

And, if no *Man* has such a Power, there are no *other higher Beings* that we know of, or, if there *be*, that, *without a God*, we can imagine should have greater Power over us than *one Man* has over another.

From whence it follows, That every *Man*, being necessarily determined to act for his own Happiness, and no *Man* having Power enough to make the Obedience of another to him the certain way to Happiness, no *Man* is to act according to the Will of another, any further than he himself judges he shall be the happier for so acting.

And if we consider further how small the Differences of Power are among Men, what reciprocal Advantages they have over one another, how changeable all these distinguishing Circumstances are, and what different Notions and Sentiments Men have of the Happiness of this Life : If, I say, we carefully consider and weigh all this, we shall be still more satisfied that there can be no such thing as Authority

thority or Subjection, Obligation, Right or Property; and better perceive the whole Force and Influence of the forementioned Principle of Action.

Supposing then Societies establish'd as we now find them, and that due Care was taken to persuade Mankind that there was no such thing as *God and Religion*; so that they had thoroughly worn off *those Notions* and all the *consequential Prejudices* that attended their former Belief, and every Man was prepared to act what he judged most conducing to his own Happiness: upon this Supposition, I say, it must needs follow, that a great many Men would find themselves very uneasy in the want of several things which they saw others possess'd of, and in the performance of several Actions by the command of others that were free from that Trouble themselves; and what could hinder or restrain such Men from seizing upon what they wanted, and freeing themselves from what was so troublesome to them, but the consideration of worsening their Condition by a successful Tryal? But this Thought could not hold them long, because there would

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would be so many that found themselves in these Circumstances that they would soon be sensible of their Strength, and being enraged at the Unreasonableness of those few, whom they saw distinguished from them by such over-proportioned Advantages of Life, they would join together in a Design of bringing things to a greater *Equality*: And those who had tasted the extraordinary pleasures of Government and Excess, whose Imaginations had been entertain'd with the Pride and Elegance of Living, would endeavour to support the *Difference of their Condition*, and be restless under the Loss of it, and employ all their Art and Strength to recover their Ground, and trample upon the rest of Mankind.

This would be the Effect of a full *Establishment* of *Irreligion* in the World, if we consider the *present State and Constitution* of all *human Societies*, there being no Nation or Society of Men, in which the *far greatest Part* of the People are not forced to use *Abundance of Pains*, and undergo a *great many Troubles and Difficulties* in *supplying their own Wants*, and in
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ministring to the Ease and Pleasure of others.

But let us suppose Men united together upon what Terms or Conditions we please, however things are divided, if every Man be convinc'd that *there is no God nor Religion, the Confusion and Misery of all will be the certain Consequence of such a Belief.* For every Man being to act for his *own Happiness*, and there being as many *several Notions of Happiness* as there are *different Passions and Inclinations* in the Soul of Man, all which require *different Methods of Pursuit*, 'tis impossible but Men must clash and interfere one with another, and every one's Happiness be built upon, or promoted by the Misery of others; which must end in the worst *State of War* imaginable. When Lust, Ambition, or Revenge is the ruling Passion in a Mans Mind, what should hinder him from making the Misery or Destruction of a Nation the way to his Satisfaction, if he can do it securely, or judges nothing more terrible than the Uncasiness of his present Condition. And the same may be said of any thing else that a Man places his chief Happiness in,

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whatever was the Cause of such a Choice.

All that can be alleged to avoid these *dreadful Consequences* that seem to be the *certain immediate Effects* of *Atheism*, is, that the *Advantages* of *Society* and *Union* are so very great, and every Man is so sensible that his own particular Happiness is included in that of the Publick; that, by virtue of this very Principle, Men will readily agree to observe all such things as tend to the *common Preservation* and *Welfare* of *Society*.

To which I answer, That this indeed is a sufficient Motive to Persons who have felt or consider'd the Inconveniences and Calamities of a State of Division, to *enter into* or *continue in* Society, upon such Terms as do *then* seem to conduce to their particular Happiness; but if *afterwards* the *breaking* of any of these Terms and Conditions shall appear to any of them to contribute *more* to their Happiness than the *keeping* them, they are *as much oblig'd* to *act contrary* to their *former Promise, Contract* or *Agreement*, as they were at *first* to *make it*.

And,

And, if we rightly consider things, we shall find, That the *Generality* of *every Society* are Men of too narrow and confin'd Understandings to perceive all the ill Consequences, *their particular Actions* have upon *Society*: and, if they have some confused Notions of them, the Mischiefs do not appear to them so near as to fall in *their Days*, and involve *them*, and they have no concern beyond *their own Lives*.

Besides, the *greatest part* both of those that are and are not capable of such Judgments and Reflexions are too strongly affected with the Sense of *present Good or Pleasure* to forego the *more certain immediate Gratifications* of their Desires upon a *faint Prospect* of *uncertain Mischiefs* that may attend them; and which, if they do happen at all, do not seem *greater or more difficult to bear* than their present Self-denial would be.

He therefore that is a *thorough Atheist*, and will pursue his Principles as far as they will carry him, must look upon all the Notions of *Government, Right and Property*, of what kind soever they be, with

all the pretended *Grounds* and *Foundations* of them, and the several *Relations* supposed to result from them; either as *false Pretences* devised by some cunning Men, by means of which they would have others act under *such and such Restraints*, that they might enjoy *their own Liberty* to more advantage; or as *useless insignificant Inventions*, which make no manner of Change in the Conduct of Life, but leave every Man to act the same way, as he would do if there were no such Notions or Expressions ever heard of:

He must look upon *himself* as the *Supreme Judge of his own Happiness*, and the *Chief Governour and Director of his own Actions*: and, being fully assured that *every Man else* is the same, with respect to *himself*, he is not to expect that *any other Man* does or will contribute to *his Happiness* any further than as he thinks he serves *his own Interest* by it; nor can he conceive a Design of contributing to the Happiness of *another Man*, but upon the *same Considerations*: And, being well convinc'd of these things, and resolv'd to act accordingly, He must examine
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wherein his *chief Happiness* consists, and how he may best attain it ; upon which Enquiry he will find, That he must place his Happiness in the Enjoyment of the *greatest Pleasure* he is capable of, without the *least Alloy* or *mixture of Pain*. Now, in pursuing what he *thinks* the greatest Pleasure, and avoiding what he judges the greatest Pain, He must *perform* or *omit any Action* whatsoever in his power, the Performance or Omission of which he *judges conducive* to *those Ends* he has proposed to himself; and so he knows must *every other Man* that *acts* upon the *same Principles*, be his Notions of Happiness or Misery never so different from *his*: upon which account he cannot but acknowledge that *all Actions* are *alike* and *of the same Nature*, and that there is no ground for any distinction of them into *lawful* and *unlawful*, *just* and *unjust*, *vertuous* and *vitious*; because there is no *Kind* or *Sort of Action* imaginable, but may contribute indifferently either to the *Happiness* or *Misery* of some Man, or to *both*, when, consider'd with respect to *several Persons*, or with respect to the *same Person* at *several times*, according to the dif-

ferent Sentiments or other Circumstances of those concerned in the Action, and consequently that he must also grant there can be no certain Rules or Principles of Acting, no particular Set of Actions or Scheme of Life which will certainly procure any Man, that follows it, more Happiness than he could obtain by any other means; but the same Man must be obliged oftentimes to act contrary Ways, and pursue the same End by the most opposite Methods imaginable; and, if he is utterly disappointed of his Hopes by the interfering Pursuits of others, he must change his chief Pleasure, and chuse a new Object of his Happiness, or undergo a great deal of Misery for obstinately sticking to his former Choice:

And further, the Person, whose Character we are drawing, if he will be true to his own Principles, should not be deter'd from the Prosecution of his Ends, by any *Concern for the Happiness of others, or Sense of their Misery, or by any regard to their Judgment and Opinion concerning his Actions and the Measures he takes:*

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He is never to prefer the *publick Good* of a *City, Nation* or *Empire* to his *own private Satisfaction*, tho the *Duration* of it be but a moment, if he cannot be *so happy without it*: *Generosity, Friendship* and *Gratitude* must give place when they do not serve to promote his *Attainment* of what appears more agreeable to him than the *Exercise* of such *Acts* which go under those *Names*; all *Sentiments* of *Tenderness, Pity* and *Compassion* are to be laid aside when the *Sufferings* and *Miseries* of *others* can procure him what he esteems a greater *Happiness* than the *Ease* of complying with those foolish *Dispositions* of his *Nature* or *Temper*, which, together with all other *Inclinations* he finds in himself, his *Reason* tells him are to be bent and directed toward his *chief Happiness*; which is the *Gratification* of the *strongest* and *most vigorous Passion* of his *Soul*, whichsoever it is that happens to be the uppermost in his *Constitution*:

He is to look upon all the *Notions* of *Praise, Honour* and *Reputation* as *meer empty Names*, when apply'd to any thing but *Cunning* and *Art* in the *managing* and *advancing* a *Man's own Interest*, and

bringing about all his Designs of this nature, by the surest and most effectual Means he can; and therefore nothing that serves for the promoting this End is to be accounted *base* or *dishonourable*; but, if the World will, *contrary to Reason and their other Principles*, agree to call some things so, and the *Opinion of others* is *necessary* to him in the Prosecution of his *chief Pleasure*, or the *imaginary Uneasiness of Disgrace* spoils his Enjoyment of it, he must comply with the *establish'd Error*, while it prevails, so far only as it *stands in his way to Happiness*, or *helps to promote it*:

And lastly, *The Person thus confirm'd in Irreligion*, being sensible that his *Life* is the *utmost Compass and Extent* of his *Happiness*, all his *Cares and Endeavours*, all his *Concerns and Designs* are to be confined within the *same Bounds*; he is to have no regard to *Memory or Posterity*, he is not to be *concern'd* if the *whole Race of Mankind* should end with him, nor abate any thing of *his present Satisfaction* to procure the greatest Advantages imaginable to *succeeding Generations*.

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This is a short Draught and Representation of the *Faith and Practice* of one that, upon a full persuasion of Mind, denies the *Being of a God*.

'Tis true indeed, there are *very few*, if any, such *clear thorough Atheists* in the World as come up to this whole Character. The Generality of those that are stiled so, are either such as *never thought any thing of the matter*, or else have *some small Remains of Religion* about them, which their *Reason and Education* will not give them leave wholly to cast off: But, if the *Ignorance* of the one and *Prejudices* of the other were removed; as, if *Atheism* spread and came into a general Reputation, they soon would be, then should we feel the dismal Effects and Consequences of these Principles far greater and dreadfuller than we can imagine or describe. For there's a great deal of Difference between an *ignorant or half-persuaded Atheist*, and one that is *positively and fully so, upon Judgment and Reflexion*. Should a Nation of People be duly taught and instructed in the *Doctrines of Irreligion*, they would be much more astonishingly wicked than
those

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those that had never heard of God, or retain'd some loose imperfect Notions of him.

And if God should suffer this to be the Result of the bold Talk and Arguing of the *present Atheists of this Nation*; they would then repent that they did not keep their *Atheism to themselves*, and make their Advantage of other Peoples *Credulity*: For, if all the People, or any considerable Number of them were of their Opinions, they would soon overturn Government, and bring all things to an Equality; and then farewell to all the Pleasures, Enjoyments and Conveniencies of Living, when every Man must labour to maintain his own Life, and be in continual Fear of having it taken away by others.

What I have said of *Atheism*, is, with very little Difference applicable to all manner of *Deism*, which is such an acknowledgment of a God, as does not include any Religion in it. For, if the *Deist* be of the *Epicurean Sect*, and makes his God an unconcern'd Spectator of Human Actions, he must, as to what concerns his own Conduct, judge and act altogether

ther the *same way* that the *Atheist* does : For, if *God* require nothing of him, is not pleased or offended with any thing he does, nor has annex'd any Rewards or Punishments to this or that sort of Life, he has full Liberty to chuse for himself, and prosecute his own Happiness in what way or manner he shall think fit ; which is exactly the Case of the *Atheist*.

'Tis the same thing, in effect, with those that make *God* a necessary Cause, and Men necessary Agents : For, according to this Opinion, all Actions are alike, as being equally necessary, and all Men must obey their own Determinations ; and there can be no general Rules or Principles for Men to act by ; there is no such thing as Obligation, Reward or Punishment : nor have any of those Notions or Distinctions, taken away by *Atheism*, any place or foundation under this Hypothesis.

As to the Persuasion of those who believe a *God*, acknowledge some sort of Providence, and think they owe some regard to the sovereign Author and Gover-

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nour of the World, but deny a future State. There seems indeed to be a considerable Difference betwixt this and the other extravagant Suppositions ; and so indeed there is, as to the Credibility of the Opinion, but the Influence it has upon Practice is very near the same ; especially with respect to those of these latter days, to whom the Certainty of a future State hath been more fully discovered. For, if we consider the present Posture and Constitution of Human Affairs, and believe that things have always gone on in the same Course from the beginning, without any sensible extraordinary Interposition of Providence, as they that deny all Revelation must believe ; If, I say, we are of this Opinion, and observe how things are managed in the World ; how Wickedness oftentimes thrives and flourishes, and that not only for a season, but strengthens and fixes itself upon as lasting Foundations as our Happiness stands upon ; and how, on the contrary, the Calamities and Sufferings of the Righteous are commensurate to their Lives, and a great many of them meerly owing to that Character, what Force or Power can some slight
Sentiments

Sentiments of Religion have upon us, when the *present Happiness of this Life* may be promoted by acting contrary to it, and we have nothing to lose or fear after *Death*?

I shall not examine how far we are oblig'd to act in such a case, upon the account of the *certain irresistible Power of God*, which he may exert, if he will, tho it should be granted that he has not hitherto done it, or upon the account of the *Benefits* we have received from him; but we shall find this true in fact, that those who are firmly persuaded that God will exert his Power no otherwise than he has done already, will not, by those promiscuous Punishments they see light upon all sorts of Men at different Times and in different Circumstances, be deter'd from prosecuting the Designs they have conceiv'd for the Attainment or Establishment of their own Happiness, by any means they shall think likely to succeed.

Thus have I endeavor'd to give a true account and Representation of all kind of Irreligion, and to shew the necessary Effects of it, with respect to the Happiness of Mankind.

And

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And now, upon a fair and just comparison of *Religion* and *Irreligion* together, according to the different *Notions* and *Consequences* of them; *Religion* must needs appear not only more agreeable to the Reason and true Interest of Men in general, more suitable and proportionate to the Capacities and Exigencies of Human Nature; but more conducive to the Happiness of particular Men, in the present Constitution and State of human Societies in the World; so that, upon a due Balance of all the usual Accidents of Life, 'tis very probable a Religious Man should enjoy more Happiness while he lives here, than a Person of another Character: as might be fully and particularly made out if there was occasion; but this requiring a set Discourse on purpose, and not falling directly within my present Design, I think it sufficient to mention some few general Considerations only, which shew the Advantages a Religious Man has above another that acts by contrary Principles. Such as are these following:

He that acts upon a true thorough Sense of Religion, has, with respect to all the external Enjoyments of the World, more contracted

contracted Desires and fewer *Wants* than another ; and, consequently, his Happiness does much seldomer interfere with any other Man's, and is less obnoxious to the Assaults of *Envy*, *Ambition* or *Covetousness*, than the prosperous Condition of the *Wicked*:

He is not eager in the pursuit of the *necessary Supports* and *lesser Conveniencies* of Life, and takes care to avoid all manner of *Injury* and *Offence* of others ; and therefore must be freer from the Effects of *Anger*, *Malice* and *Revenge*, than such as advance their own Ease or Fortune by disquieting and robbing others :

He professes to help and assist in promoting the *Happiness* of other Men, without any Worldly Advantage to himself; and therefore there will be a great many who will find it their Interest to defend and secure him, and perform several Offices of Kindness to him, to engage his future Endeavours for them when there shall be occasion ; whereas, he that is known to act for himself only, will be trusted and assisted no further than his own present Interest is perceived unavoidably to concur with another Man's :
And

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And lastly, the Happiness a *Religious Man* proposes to himself in *another Life* is such, as, he is firmly persuaded, exceeds all *Experience, Imagination, or possibility of Comprehension*; and, consequently, the *Hopes* of attaining it, being strong and vigorous in proportion to his Belief, must afford him *greater Pleasure here* than the *Hopes* of any other *Enjoyment of this Life*; and a well grounded Hope of the greatest and happiest Condition a Man can frame to himself here, gradually increasing by a successful Advance of the finest best-form'd Designs for the Attainment of it; is, I believe, compar'd with any *actual Enjoyment*; whatsoever, the *highest pitch of Pleasure* we can be sensible of, *without a future Prospect*; which must be all this, and as much higher, as this Religious Hope is *greater and more durable in the Possession*; and the present Assurance of it *less liable to Disappointment and Defeat*, as it certainly is, there being no *external Accidents or Endeavours* that can deprive us of it.

This being the State and Condition of a *Religious Man*, he must be generally happier than the *Wicked*, in *Truth and Reality*,

lity, tho perhaps not in *their Judgment* of him ; as enjoying more *Ease and Satisfaction in himself*, by a constant unalterable Success in the pursuit of his main End ; as being *less exposed* to the *Injuries of others*, by assisting some, and a due Care not to intrench upon the Happiness of any, and being *better able to bear* those *real Calamities and Miseries* that may happen, by a certain, comfortable expectation of *such Happiness* as will *infinitely outweigh all* he can suffer within the Compass of *this Life*.

This I think abundantly sufficient for the Proof and Establishment of *Religion* ; but for a further confirmation of the Truth, and that I may leave no room for the *Enemies of God and Mankind* to glory in their Strength, as if they had as much to say for *their Opinions* if they might be heard ;

V. I shall, in the next place, consider the *Grounds and Pretences of Irreligion* ; what *can be alleged* in defence of it, and what are the *usual Pleas* for it ; and from thence shew the *Absurdity and Folly* of
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their *Principles* and *Actions*, who have no better *Reasons* for what they believe and do than those, upon examination, will be found to be.

In the Prosecution of which Subject I shall observe these Steps or Measures:

1. I shall enquire how far *Irreligion* is capable of being proved, what *Kind* or *Degree* of proof it admits of.
2. I shall consider the *common Ways* and *Methods* of defending it.
3. I shall answer some of the *principal Objections* made use of against *Religion*.
4. I shall make some *general Reflexions* upon the *different Grounds* and *Foundations Religion* and *Irreligion* stand upon, and the *different Conduct* of those who act under the Influence of the *one* and the *other*.

1. *First* then I am to enquire how far *Irreligion* is capable of *Proof*; that is, how far a *Man* is able to prove, there is *no God*, *no Obligation* of acting such a way, if there be, or *no future State of Happiness* or *Misery*.

Was

Was a Man disposed to believe all or any of this, or had a mind to convince others of the Truth of these Propositions, what way or Method could he take to satisfy his own or their Understanding? 'Tis plain that none of the things enquired into are Objects of *Sense* or *Internal Consciousness*, we cannot see with our Eyes, nor feel with any intimate Perception that there is *no God, Religion, or Future State*; and therefore, *no new Experiments or Observations* of this nature, nor any *old Testimonies or Authorities*, grounded upon such, have any place upon this Subject, any further than they furnish Matter for *Reasoning and Reflexion*, from whence we must immediately derive all the Knowledge we can have of any of the Propositions in question; all which being *negative*, there's no other way of proving the Truth of them but by shewing either their *Repugnancy or Disagreeableness* to our Reason, and those other Principles of our Knowledge which we cannot possibly doubt of; the first way we demonstrate them to be *certain*, the latter we make them appear *probable*.

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As to *Demonstration*, there's no way of *demonstrating* a thing *not to be*, but by proving 'tis *impossible* and a *Contradiction to be*; and who will undertake to convince the World that 'tis *impossible* there should be a *God*? or supposing there be, that *Religion* and a *Future State* are downright *Contradictions*? What is there in any of these *Notions* that shocks our *Reason*, and restrains our *Assent*? What other *more certain* Knowledge have we that makes our *Belief* of these things inconsistent with it? There was never any *Proof* of this kind offered or pretended to yet; the *Vanity* of all such Attempts being easily discoverable upon the first *Trial* of our *Understandings* that way.

All that remains then to be done, is, to produce such *Reasons* and *Arguments* for the *Doctrines of Irreligion*, to shew such *Marks* and *Characters* of *Truth* upon them as shall render them *suitable* and *agreeable* to our *Minds*; so that, upon a fair *Proposal*, we shall be *easily inclined* to *embrace* and *assent* to them, tho the *Evidence* be not so strong as *irresistibly* to *determine us*.

This

This we call arguing, from *Probability*; which is nothing else but an *Appeal to the common Reason of Mankind*; so that what the *generality of Wise Men*, in all *Ages*, have, upon due examination, assented to as *most agreeable to right Reason*, that opinion is *most probable*; and, in matters of *pure Reflexion* deduced from the *first Principles of Knowledge*, which are common to all Men alike, that have the same use of their *Faculties*, this must be acknowledged to be a very good *Rule and Measure of Probability*: But *Atheism* and *Irreligion* will never stand this test; the wise and learned part of the World having constantly rejected and condemned them.

But supposing the Disquisition was to begin *now*, and Men were to chuse their Opinions again, how would a Person go about to prove that 'tis *more agreeable to Reason and the Nature of Things* that there should be *no God, no Religion, nor Future State*, than that there should be any of these?

All the Arguments that can be made use of upon this occasion, must be drawn from our *own Existence and Constitution*,

and from the *Existence, Frame and Disposition* of the *World*, and all things *without us*. We are certain that we are, and we know not our *Original*, or by what *Power* we came at first to be : We perceive a great many things *without us*, the *Beginning* of which we know not, nor by what means they came to exist : Is it therefore more likely and probable that there should be no such *Being* as we conceive to be the *Author* of all these things, than that there really is some such perfect *Being*, which was the *Cause* of these *Effects* we perceive ? Can we, from the *Oeconomy of the World* and the *Course of Nature*, infer, that there is no governing and directing *Power* in the *Universe* ? Can we, from the *Frame and Disposition of our own Minds*, prove, that we are under no *Law* or *Obligation* of acting ? or that *Religion* is destructive of our *Happiness* ? Can we, from the *Circumstances of our Nature* or the *Constitution of things without us*, make it reasonable to think we shall not live again, be conscious of all our former *Actions*, and be happy or miserable according to the different *Kinds* of them ? However true these things may or are supposed

posed to be in themselves, they will by no means follow from the forementioned Principles, and there can be no other but these imagined antecedent to them: For if God, Religion and a Future State are all possible, as they must be acknowledg'd to be, the real Existence of any thing else will never furnish any Argument for their Non-existence.

2. In vain then do we expect any direct Proof of Irreligion. In the next place therefore I shall consider the usual Ways and Methods of defending it which are these Four.

1. Ridiculing Religion.
2. Requiring a more certain Mathematical proof of it.
3. Endeavouring to shew the Possibility of things subsisting without it.
4. And raising some loose Objections against it, which chiefly aim at the present Profession and Practice of it in the World.

1. As to the First of these ways; 'tis certain that the Generality of those who
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advance

advance or any of the forementioned Opinions, contain'd under the Notion of *Irreligion*, are such as *barely deny* the contrary Truths, without giving any Reason for their Disbelief: they speak a bold thing against *God* and *Religion*, and so fall to their Sins without ever examining the Truth of what they say; a *light Word* or *Phrase* applied to a *serious Thing*, an *odd Simile* or *Comparison*, a *ridiculous Turn* or *Allusion* is all they pretend to. Now, there's nothing so well establish'd or confirm'd but may be *ridicul'd* tho it cannot be *confuted*; and the greater and more sublime the Subject is the fitter for *Burlesque*; the Boldness of the Raillery heightens the Wit of it. But I need not spend time to prove that a *Jest* is no *Argument*: Besides, I shall have occasion to consider the Persons of this Character in another place, and so shall pass on

2. To the *Second Way* made use of by the Patrons of *Irreligion* to justify their *Infidelity*; and that is, by alleging that the *Doctrines of Religion* and the *Proofs* given of it have not *that Degree of Certainty* they ought to have in order to
their

their Conviction. Why, say they, are not such important Points as those, in which the Happiness of *Mankind* is so far concern'd, made as plain and evident to our Understandings as any Proposition in the *Mathematicks*? prove them to us in the same manner and we will believe them. The *Insufficiency* and *Absurdity* of which Plea will manifestly appear from these following Considerations.

For, first of all, 'tis very absurd for Persons to call for *more* and *greater* Proof towards confirming the Truth of any thing before they have confuted one of those Arguments that are already advanced; and therefore the Proof that has been given of Religion, whatever it be, is sufficient till it is overthrown by contrary Allegations.

In the next place, 'tis ridiculous to ask for *other Kind* of Proof than the *Nature of the Thing* will bear; it being the same as to desire that the Nature of Things should be chang'd: and therefore to call for *Mathematical Demonstration* in Points of Religion, is as much as to say, let Religion be turn'd into *Mathematicks* and we will believe it; the Meaning of which is
only

only this, that such Men as these like *Mathematicks* better than they do *Religion*: For indeed the Persons that call for this kind of Proof in *Religion*, will allow of no such thing as *Demonstration* any where but in *Numbers* and *Figures*; whereas we have as clear *Ideas* of many other things, and do as evidently perceive the *Agreement* or *Disagreement* of them, and make as certain *Deductions* from them; and that particularly in the present Subject, where we have as clear and distinct Notions of *Knowledge*, *Will*, *Power*, *Duration*, and all those other original *Ideas* from whence we took our first Rise in the Proof of *Religion* as we have of *Number* and *Figure*; we are also as certain of the Truth of those Propositions, that *Nothing* can make it self, that *Something* must be eternal, that *Motion* must begin from *Will*, and several other from whence all our Arguments for *Religion* are deduced, as we are of such *Mathematical Axioms* as these, that *the Whole* is bigger than any of its *Parts*, that *when equal Numbers* are added to equal the whole is equal, and the like; and the *Deduction* of other Propositions from those former

mer is, in all the intermediate links of Connexion, as evidently perceived *there as here*, and the *main Conclusions* as certain as any *Mathematical Conclusion* at the *same Distance* from the *first Principles* of that kind of Knowledge.

In the Proof of a *God* this is very plain ; and if the *Obligations of Religion*, and a *Future State* will not be allowed to have the *same degree of Evidence*, yet they have *all the Certainty* 'tis conceivable they should have by way of Deduction from any Ideas our Minds are furnisht with ; so that, supposing them true, they cannot be proved any otherwise from *bare unassisted Reason* ; and therefore 'tis very unjust to require a *further Demonstration* of them, when the *rational Grounds* they stand upon cannot be overthrown by *contrary Proofs*. I do not mention the additional Advantage of *Revelation*, not to be disproved by any *Counter-revelation*, because that belongs to another place.

But, besides all this, where we are under a *necessity* of *judging* one way, as we are in all such matters where it concerns our Happiness to *act* or *not to act*, 'tis contrary to Reason not to be determined

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mined by *that degree of Evidence*, whatever it be, that appears on *one side*, when we have nothing on the *other side* to balance it, and therefore it must be very foolish and absurd to take the Party of *Irreligion* for no other reason but this, that the *Proofs of Religion* have not all *that Strength and Evidence of Conviction* which *some other Truths* seem to have. And yet this is the only Defence some People make for their *Impiety and Unbelief*.

3. But others there are that pretend to build their *Irreligion* upon *positive Principles*: some of which have made *new Schemes or Hypotheses*, wherein they endeavour to explain the *original, Disposition, and Conduct* of things without a God; but all that they prove, is, that they who *only denied* the common Doctrines concerning God, Providence, &c. without advancing any other in their stead were the wiser Men; For all these new Notions of theirs either signify *nothing at all*, or they mean the same thing as we do by a God, or else they are altogether *irrational and contradictory*.

What

What are *Fate, Necessity, Chance, and universal Soul*, but meer Covers for Ignorance, of the same kind as *occult Causes*? the true Result of all which Principles is a *new sort of Creation*; where *all things* are made by *nothing*, or *nothing* is set up as the *efficient Cause of all things*.

But if those that use any of these Names mean, by the *Maker or Cause* of all things, a *Being distinct* from the *things made*; such a *Being* cannot be conceived without all those glorious *Attributes* which make up our *Idea of God*. For, if we will allow the *original Author* of the World the *highest Perfections imaginable by us*, as his Work certainly required; if the *first great Cause* of all things had the *noblest Qualities we can conceive*, as the *Effects* produced by it sufficiently declare, we must grant *this Author or Cause* to be an *intelligent Being*, endued with *Knowledge and Will*: For 'tis impossible for *Man* to frame a *Notion of any Powers, Faculties, or Qualities, greater or nobler than these*; and 'tis easier to believe that *some Man of more refined Intellectuals* made the World, than that any *other Cause*, which wanted these *Perfections*, could be the *Author of it*.

I shall

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I shall not here enter into a more particular Disquisition of any *Scheme* or *Hypothesis* that excludes the *Being of a God*; having consider'd them all before, in the former part of this Discourse, and shew'd them to be, in those Points, where they mean any thing *distinct* from the *common Notions* we have undertook to defend, very *absurd* and *inconsistent*.

And indeed, the *Falshood* and *Absurdity* of all these *Schemes* and *Hypotheses* which pretend to give an account of the *Frame* and *State* of things *without a God*, or *independently of him*, are so manifest and notorious, that I am fully persuaded a Man may make good the Charge against a great Disproportion of Parts and Learning; but this is not my business at present, nor is there any occasion for such an Undertaking now.

For should we allow the *Atheist's Scheme of things* to be *possible* and *consistent*, which is the most that is pretended, yet we are assured, by the *common Reason* of Mankind, that the Philosophy of a God is *most rational* without the Help of *Revelation* and *universal Tradition* which confirm the Truth of it: and
therefore

therefore the *Possibility* of another Hypothesis cannot justify the Defenders of it unless they can also make it appear *more reasonable and fit to be believed* than that which obtains; but the *Atheist* will never be able to give an *easier, juster and more satisfactory* account of all the *Phænomena* in the *Universe* than he who owns a *God*, if he should offer at such a thing, which is more than any one has ventured at yet.

And the same may be applied to others who *acknowledge a God*, and pretend to shew there is *no such thing as Religion* and a *Future State*: For they cannot say that *God* who *made the World*, and all things in it, *cannot oversee and govern the Works of his hands*; that *He*, who *gave Man his Being*, and all his *Faculties and Capacities*, *cannot require him to act* after such a manner *while he lives*, or is not able to *renew him again after Death*, and *continue his Life to him in such a State as he pleases to make agreeable or disagreeable to him*, and *as long as he pleases*: This is to bring *Weakness out of Strength*, to set *Bounds to God within the acknowledged Sphere of his Power*, to say he
cannot

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cannot do things which are less than those he can do.

Nor can they prove 'tis *more agreeable* to the *Nature of God*, and all those *Notions* we have concerning *Him* and *our selves*, that he *should not* exercise his *Power* after this manner than that *he should*. The utmost all the Proof they bring can amount to, is to shew, that 'tis *possible* *God may not do* all this that we conceive of him: as will plainly appear, if we consider the chief Arguments made use of upon this occasion, which are taken from the supposed *Materiality* and *Mortality* of the *Soul*.

Here lies the *Principal Strength* of *Irreligion*; these are the *fundamental Principles* the whole *Fabrick* stands upon; and great Endeavours have been used to confirm the Truth of them. Now, 'tis plain to any Man, that duly considers these *Notions*, without that Confusion and Ambiguity of Terms they are commonly delivered in, that 'tis *impossible* to prove, that what we call the *Soul* is not something *perfectly distinct* from *Matter* and *Motion*, and all the *Modifications* of them, and that it cannot *subsist* and *act* after the
Dissolution

Dissolution of the Body; nor are there any Arguments producible to persuade us 'tis more probable that the *Soul* should be something material and dissolved with the *Body*, than that it should be a distinct Principle and survive it. All that can be said, is, that we cannot, from the Knowledge we have of the Qualities and Operations we attribute to each, certainly demonstrate what we term *Soul* and *Body* to be two distinct Substances; tho, at the same time, it must be confess'd, that Men have been generally more disposed to believe this than the contrary Opinion; and 'tis as demonstrable that what we attribute to the *Soul* is not any Mode, Composition, or Result of the Qualities we ascribe to *Body*, as it is that any Idea we have in our Minds is not any other.

Allowing then that 'tis possible that every thing we ascribe to *Body* and *Soul* separately may be united in one common Subject, which is the most that can be supposed; and that this common Subject, at the time we call *Death* loses those Capacities and Powers we attribute to the *Soul*; in the same manner as it is divested of Motion; from hence it follows, that it is

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possible

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possible also that the *same common Subject* may never subsist in the same manner it did before, with all those different Qualities united in it, in like manner as 'tis possible what is now at rest may never be in motion again. But then it is *as possible* also that it *may*: God *may*, if he pleases, put us together again after death, in such a manner that we shall feel our selves to be the same we were before we died, and be conscious of all our former Life; and that he *will* do so we have a great deal of reason to think, had we not any assurance of it from *Revelation*, as has before been proved. And therefore the Arguments for the *Materiality* and *Mortality* of the *Soul*, let them have all the Weight and Certainty they are imagined to have, are wholly trifling and insignificant, with respect to what they are brought to prove: For no *new Discoveries* are hereby made of the *Will* and *Design* of God; and, consequently the Proof that has been given of *Religion* and a *Future State*, will have the same Force and Evidence still, tho the *Soul* should be granted to be *Material* and *Mortal*: we should have all the same Reason to believe

lieve that *God does require us to act* after such a manner, and *will reward or punish us in another Life* according as we behave our selves in *this*; *no Arguments* made use of in the Proof of this Point, being taken from the *Immaterial and Immortal Nature* of our Souls, but from what we certainly, by *infallible Consciousness*, know of *our selves*, and what, by *evident Demonstration* we collect of the *Nature of God*, which every Man that owns such a Being must ascribe to him.

Thus have I examined the Pretences of those Adversaries of Religion, who take upon them to establish *new Principles and Hypotheses*, to explain the State and Constitution of things by; and have shewn, that the utmost that they aim at, is, to make it *seem possible* that *those Appearances* in the World, from whence we infer the *Being of a God, Religion, and a Future State*, may be *otherwise* accounted for; without endeavouring to *destroy our Scheme*; or, upon a just comparison in all points, to shew that *theirs* is a *more rational System*.

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But most of the Professors and Favourers of *Irreligion*, we have now in *these latter Times* to deal with, are such as never trouble themselves with *Schemes* and *Hypotheses* ; They come by their Opinions much easier, and maintain them with less expence of Argument. Some loose unconsider'd *Objection* against any *Notion* or *Doctrine* that goes under the name of *Religion*, or any thing that has any relation to it, is enough for their turn : They never examine what is the just Inference that may be drawn from it, or what Answer may be given to it, but immediately condemn all *Religion* for the sake of some little remote *Consequence* their Imagination represents to them as inconsistent with it.

3. Some of the principal of which Objections I shall answer very briefly, and shew the Absurdity of them ; which is the Business I propos'd to my self under the Third of those Heads into which I divided my Discourse concerning the *Grounds and Pretences of Irreligion*.

The

The chief and most common Objections against Religion are these:

Mysteries, Inconsistencies and Absurdities in Scripture;

Entravagant Notions and pernicious Doctrines maintain'd under the Name of Religion;

Varietey of Opinions and Censures of one another among those that profess to own the same common Principles of Faith and argue from them;

Foolish and ridiculous Arguments brought by some in the Defence of true Opinions;

The Scandalous Lives of great Pretenders to Piety and Vertue, and such as are peculiarly design'd to promote the Practice of them among others;

Religion the Effect of Fear and Education;

Religion a meer politick Contrivance.

As to the first of these Objections, I shall consider it no farther than as it is made use of to weaken the Credibility of all Religion; and 'tis sufficient to expose the Weakness of it by shewing the Argument

ment barely with its Consequences, which is this; Such a *Passage in Scripture* I cannot *understand* or *reconcile* to another, or such a *Story* or *Account* of Matter of Fact *does not agree* with my Knowledge of things of the like Nature, therefore *this Passage* or *Account is false*, therefore the *Book* in which it was found is *false*, therefore *all the several Books in the whole Bible*, which were writ by *several Men*, in *several Places* of the World, and at *several Times* during the space of about two thousand Years, are *all false*; therefore there is *no God*, or *no Obligation* of obeying him if there be, or *no Future State*.

Most of the *particular Cavils* against *Scripture* have been fully answered by those who have purposely undertook the Defence of *Revelation*: but this is sufficient at present to shew, that nothing of this kind proves any thing against the Truth of *Scripture in general*, much less against the *first Fundamental Principles of Religion*, which I have endeavoured to establish.

The next thing objected against the Truth of Religion, is, Several *absurd* and *pernicious*

pernicious Doctrines proposed to the World under the Name of Religion, and warmly contended for by those that believe and maintain them.

Some Men place all their Religion in *Shew* and *Pageantry*, their Worship is all Theatrical, and a great deal of their Faith and Discipline extravagant and *Romantick*; therefore all Religion is *Priest-craft*, and all *Scripture Legend*, saith the *Atheist*; but *Socrates* and *Plato* would not have argued thus; those wiser Heathens, tho they laught at the *Gods* and *Devotion* of the *People of their Times*, did not therefore turn *Atheists*, but employed their whole Reason to search out *higher Notions of God*, and frame to themselves a more rational Religion.

Bigotry and *Superstition* have oftentimes produced as dreadful and pernicious Consequences to a Country or Nation, as the wild Liberties and Extravagancies of *Atheism* could do: but what's that to Religion, which suffers equally both ways, and is no more the Cause or Occasion of the one than the other? Cruelty and Revenge, and all Actions tending to the mischief or Destruction of Mankind are as

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contrary to the Nature of Religion when exercised by a *superstitious Zealot*, as when practised by an *Atheist*; tho the former covers them with that Name, and the latter does not: and therefore *true Religion* is very unjustly and unreasonably condemn'd upon this account.

Another foolish Objection is, that *variety of Opinions* which is found among the *Professors of Religion*, and their *peremptory Censures* of one another for holding false and absurd Doctrines.

What a strange *Disagreement* is there among Men in *Points of Religion*? say those that have none at all. *Some* believe *one thing* and *some* another; *some* expound *Scripture* in *this* Sense, and *some* in *that*; *Creed* is set up against *Creed*, and *Altar* against *Altar*; what *one* Man thinks his *Duty*, *another* apprehends *Damnation* from. Supposing then we have our *Opinions* to chuse, what is to be done in such a Case? shall we take the *strongest Side*, what the *most*, or what, we think the *wisest* believe? or shall we examine the *Reasons* of all *Sides* impartially without *Prejudice*, and let our *Judgments* be determined by
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the greatest Appearance of Evidence ? No, we will do none of all this ; but, without examining their several Pleas, we will take up Opinions *different from all of them* : and because *one* Man denies *one* thing, and *another* another, we will be sure to be free from those Errors they condemn one another for, and *deny* what *no Body else* does, what *all the different Parties* subscribe to and agree in. These are the Resolutions of the *Irreligious* ; and what a strange Contradiction is this to make *Unity of Consent* the Character of *Truth*, and yet allow no Opinions to be true but those that have the *least pretence* to it ?

Neither is it more just and reasonable to condemn *all Religion* upon the account of the *weak Defence* and Patronage of *some of its Professors*. What if the *Atheists* should be able to defeat some trifling Argument of *ignorant well-meaning Honesty* or *superstitious Zeal* : to triumph presently, and cry out that *Ignorance* or *Phrensy* was the Mother of *all Devotion* would be as foolish a Boast as for a General to despise the *Weakness* and *Cowardise*

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dise of his Enemy, because he had plundered two or three small open Villages, when all the great Towns, and the chief Strength of the Kingdom had been unassaulted or attempted in vain.

The *scandalous Practices* of Men of great Pretences to Piety, and such as, by their peculiar manner of Life, are look'd upon to be wholly in the Interests of Religion is another very unwarrantable Occasion of some Mens disbelieving every thing that goes under that Name: who infer from hence, that such Persons as these do not believe Religion *themselves*, and consequently there's no more Reason to think that *others* do, tho they disguise their Notions better, in order to serve their present Interest; especially if they be Men of such Sense as is sufficient to put them above the suspicion of *vulgar Credulity*. But this Argument is false and *unconcluding* in all its Parts.

For, First of all, it does not follow, That such Men as these believe nothing *themselves* of what they profess; the truer Inference is, That corrupt Nature, vicious *Habits*, and a loose Education are oftentimes

times too hard for *Conscience* and *Reason*, it being very plain that the same thing happens in several other Cases. For there's *no Man* whatsoever, be his Principles never so loose and wide, his Reason never so much deprav'd, but shall many times do what he himself shall condemn himself for doing, and which contradicts the Principles he resolv'd to stand by: and therefore, for a Man to infer from *some gross Sins of a Pretender to Religion*, that he does *not believe* any thing of what he professes, is as absurd as to prove that an *Atheist* does certainly *believe a God*, whatever he says to the contrary, because he often *swears by him*, and *invokes him* in his *Curses*.

Besides, suppose this true of *some Men* who pretend to a great Sense of Religion themselves, or undertake to promote it in others, that they *do not believe* any thing of it; as there are sometimes *Presumptions* strong enough to induce us to judge so, what reason have we from hence to conclude that *others* of a more unsuspected Conduct are all of the same mind, if we could but see to the Bottom of them? or, what if there be a great many
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false Pretenders to Religion? how is this an *Argument* against the *Truth* of it? we have no reason indeed to believe it upon their Word; nor does their contradicting what they say by their Practice give us any more reason to disbelieve it. Nor, if *some of those* whose *peculiar Employment it is*, and whose *present Interest it seems to be* to propagate and advance the Belief of *Religion* in the World, should be supposed to believe nothing of it *themselves*, would it follow from hence, that their Unbelief was occasion'd by knowing more of it than others, and being better acquainted with the whole *Mystery* and *Contrivance*: this is evidently proved to be false by the Experience of those who have thought more and enquir'd further concerning these things than the rest of the World have done; for the *more they have consider'd* the fundamental Doctrines of Religion, and the *more just and exact* they have been in tracing and examining all their Reasonings about them, the *stronger* have they been confirm'd in the Belief of them. But if there *really are* such Men, as, for argument's sake, we have *supposed*, they were certainly *Atheists* before they
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put on the *Garb of Religion* : and what should hinder an *Atheist* from taking up this Disguise, and preparing himself for it by a close Dissimulation, who thinks all Means lawful for the promoting his present Interest in this World ; and 'tis not every *Atheist's* good fortune to be better provided for in *another Condition of Life*, than he might probably be in *acting a Religious Part*.

But, if the *Generality* of all sorts of Men must be allow'd *really to believe* the Religion they profess, this, says the *Unbeliever*, is the Reason of it ; A strange prevalence of *Fear*, and strong Impressions of *Education* have captivated their Understandings, and disposed them all to the same way of Reasoning. Upon this account it is that there have been so few true Philosophers, that were able to think rightly and judge clearly of things ; But now and then some bold Genius has ventured to shake off his Chains, and assert the *Liberty* and *Prerogative* of human Nature ; and as *one Alexander* or *Cesar*, so *one Epicurus* or *Lucretius* is enough for one Age : such Spirits are not of the com-
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men Make, and appear in the World but seldom, and are therefore to be admired. To which it may be sufficient to answer, that I have already proved *Religion* to be the *necessary Issue and Product of Reason*, and the *first unquestionable Principles of all our Knowledge*; and therefore, *what-ever else* is assigned as a *Cause* of it must be *false*.

But I have this further Consideration to add, *viz.* that the Effects of *Fear* and *Education* never are so uniform, lasting and universal as the Belief of Religion is observed to be, especially when they act contrary to the *Truth* and *Reason* of things, as they are supposed to do in this case; That Men are as much and as often disposed to *deny* as to *believe* what they *fear*, when the *Grounds* and *Reasons* for fear are the same, and more inclin'd to the former when the things feared are represented at a great Distance; That *sensual Appetites*, *Habits of indulging them*, *present Enjoyments*, or *near Prospects of Pleasure*, and *Customs of living contrary to the Rules of Religion*, have a much stronger and more powerful Influence upon the Judgments of Men, than such Impressi-
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of Religion in General. 211

ons of *Fear* or *Education* which contradict all these; especially if *Reason* be of the *same side* with them, as the Patrons of Irreligion must say; And therefore, neither *Fear* nor *Education* nor *both* together can be the *true Cause* of such a *general Belief* of *Religion* as is profess'd in the World; but the *Reason* and *Evidence* of the *things believed*.

The last Objection I shall mention, which the *Atheist* thinks the most formidable, and a perfect Discovery of the whole Mystery, is, That *Religion* is a *Politick Contrivance*.

Now, that which gives occasion for such a Suspicion, is, That all the chiefest Politicians, in their wise Precepts of Advice, have thought it necessary for every Prince to encourage and promote *Religion* in his Country, and to have a Shew of it himself whatever his inward Sentiments were. But *this* is so far from being any Plea for Atheism, that 'tis a very strong Argument for the *Truth, Reasonableness* and *Necessity of Religion*: For that is certainly highly rational which is most suitable and agreeable to the
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publick Reason of Mankind considered together *in Society*; without which there would be little Use of *Reason* at all. And, if Men are *born sociable* Creatures, if they *naturally desire Society*, and Society cannot possibly *subsist* without *Religion*, as the *Objection* it self supposes, then is *Religion* as agreeable to the *Nature of Man*, and as necessary to his *Happiness* as *Conversation* and *living together*. And were it not for other *Mens* having *Religion*, the *Atheist* would find it very uncomfortable living in the *World*.

These are the chief *Pleas*, *Defences* and *Objections* commonly urg'd and insisted upon by the *Enemies of Religion*. And, if there be any other, which have not been here particularly considered, they admit of the same *Answers* as those that are here mentioned, or may be as easily accounted for out of the *Proofs* before given of the *Truth* and *Certainty of Religion*; and therefore, without spending more time in making *little Cavils* and *groundless Suspensions* look considerable by a formal *Examination* and *Answer* of them, I shall pass to the

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4. Next thing I proposed to do, in order to shew the Absurdity and *Folly* of the *Principles* and *Practice* of those who *reject* the great important Truths. of *Religion* ; and that is to make some *general Reflexions* upon the *different Grounds* and *Foundations* *Religion* and *Irreligion* stand upon, and the *different Conduct* of those that act under the Influence of the one and the other.

Now, upon a strict and impartial Review of all that has been offered or advanced in this Cause, we shall find that all the several Propositions, contained under the Notion of *Religion*, have been proved to be *true* and *agreeable to our Reason*, by a *direct Deduction* from the *first Principles of our Knowledge* ; which Deduction, in most of the Parts of it, has all the Evidence and Certainty any consequential Truths can have, and in the other as much as the Nature of the things proved is capable of, in the present Condition and Circumstances of our Being, and such as the Mind fully assents to, without being able to entertain the

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least Suspicion of a Mistake, tho it cannot prove there is not a bare Possibility of Error.

It will likewise appear that *Religion*, in all the particular Branches and Duties of it, is admirably *fitted* for the promoting the *Happiness* of *Mankind in general*, considering their *present State* and Condition in the World : And further, that 'tis highly probable at least, if not evident, that the greatest degree of Happiness every *particular Man*, absolutely speaking, is capable of, will be the Consequence of his regular Discharge of all the Obligations of Religion, and that *proportionably* to a Man's *Behaviour*, in *this respect*, while *he lives*, shall his *Reward* be in *another State* ; but in every proportion greater than can be conceived or imagined by us now.

And as the Truth of these Matters will appear to be made out from the *Reason* and *Nature of things* ; so will it be further manifest that the *general Opinion of the World* has always went the same way : and, if *Testimony* or *Authority* could be of any use here, that far the most and greatest is on this Side.

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Besides, we shall not be only satisfied of these things by a *positive direct Proof*; but we shall see the *contrary Hypotheses* proved *absurd* and *impossible*; or, where any thing *possible* is advanced, we shall perceive it *less probable* in it self, and the *Consequences* drawn from it *false* and *ridiculous*.

As we shall likewise be convinc'd that *Libertinism* and *Irreligion* do evidently and directly tend to the *Misery of Mankind in general*, with respect to the *State* they *now are in*, and will very probably, if not certainly, render every *particular* Person that owns or acts by these Principles, inconceivably more miserable in *another State* of Life; and that in *proportion* to his *Neglect* or *Violation* of the Duties prescribed by Religion.

On the contrary, we shall find that the *Doctrines of Irreligion* have *none of these Grounds of Credibility*, nor are or can be defended by *any of these Ways or Methods* by which Religion is establish'd.

That they, consisting wholly in the *Denial* and *Contradiction* of other Propositions, do not admit of any *positive direct Proof*, but must be proved by over-
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throwing the Truth of the Assertions denied;

That the *Assertions denied* cannot be shewed to be *false*, either from their *Repugnancy* or *Disagreeableness* to our *Reason*, and *antecedent Principles* of Knowledge; or their *Inconsistence* with our *Happiness*; nor from the *common Suffrage* and *Testimony of Mankind*;

And that the *negative Principles of Irreligion* and the *practical Consequences* of them cannot, upon a *just Comparison*, be proved to be *more suitable* to our *Reason* or *Happiness* than the *contrary Doctrines*.

We shall likewise, upon a slight Review of the *common Arguments* and *Pleas* for *Irreligion*, be easily satisfied that nothing of all this is so much as pretended to; but that the strongest Effort of human Invention that way reaches no further than an *Offer at explaining* the *common Appearances*, the *Original*, *Order*, *Course* and *Event* of things, *without a God*, *independently of him*, or with *Exclusion* to those particular Consequences respecting Men, which go under the Name of *Duty* and *Sin*, *Reward* and *Punishment*; and that the most any Endeavours of this kind

kind can amount to, is, to shew that 'tis possible things may be, after that particular manner they are explained to be.

These are the *different Grounds* and *Proofs* of *Religion* and *Irreligion*: which if we carefully compare together, it will easily appear that they do not only differ as *more* or *less rational*; but that *all the Reason* lies on the side of *Religion*; the *Conception* or *Proof* of a *bare Possibility* of the World's subsisting *without* any such thing, being no manner of *Argument* that there *is none*. And therefore it must be very absurd to deny *all the Principles* of *Religion*, and every thing brought in defence of them upon *this account only*.

But allowing there may be a great deal more said for *Irreligion* so as to render it *something probable* to be believed; yet if the *positive direct Proofs* for *Religion* stand good, without considering those which pretend to shew the *Absurdity* and *Impossibility* of a *contrary Scheme*, the *former* cannot stand upon *so sure and firm a bottom* as the *latter*, nor be advanced to *so high a Degree of Credibility*; and therefore it must be very unreasonable to give our assent on that side where

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there is the *least Appearance of Probability.*

But supposing the *Proof* on both sides equal, *such different Consequences* do attend the Belief of the *one* and the *other*, that 'tis the Extremity of Madness and Folly to prefer the *Party of Irreligion*. Which, besides the *present particular Pains, Troubles* and *Disadvantages* it is said to bring upon the Persons that make this Choice, and the *Mischiefs* and *Inconveniences* *Mankind* will certainly suffer from one another upon this account ; besides all this, I say, it is threatned with *eternal, inexpressible Misery* to come *after this Life*. And this is a Consequence so concerning and dreadful, that it must be a *vast Preponderancy of Proof* that can justify our running the hazard of it ; which, I am sure, is more than any Man that makes the venture can pretend to.

I do not here argue, that a Man ought to prefer *Religion* before *Irreligion* merely because 'tis *safer* so to do ; because, by the *Confession of all Parties*, a Man shall not suffer any thing in another state by such a Choice, whereas he that chuses *Irreligion* has only his *own Opinion* for

for his security, and is threatned by the Persons of a contrary Persuasion with *eternal Misery* after Death: I do not think *this alone* a *sufficient* reason to determine a Man's Choice to one side, against all other Arguments to the contrary; for then a Man might be threatned out of *any thing*: but, if the Evil threatned be *very considerable*, and 'tis *full as probable* that it should happen, as it is that it should not, which is the Case now supposed, he acts very rationally and wisely, who chuses rather to undergo *some lesser Inconveniences* at present than put himself in danger of greater. Now, that the *Misery* annex'd to *Irreligion* is *very considerable* cannot be denied, it being supposed greater than can be *imagined* or *conceived* by us: and that it is *as probable* it should be the Portion of all those that believe and act by such Principles as *not*, must be allow'd whatever *Hypothesis* be true.

For if *Chance* made the World, notwithstanding all the *Characters of Wisdom* we behold in it, why may it not as well happen that there should be a *Future State*, and that those we call *Irreligious* should be *miserable* in it, and the *Religious*

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happy? It looks indeed like *Wisdom*, and so does the *Regularity of the World*, and a great many *constant Discriminations* made there. Why should the Wind blow down the *rotten Fruit* and leave the *sound*? why should the Plague sweep away *some* and leave *others* in the same City or House? but there are *natural Reasons and Causes* for these things: so there may be for the other, for ought we know; the *Wicked* may be *peculiarly disposed* to be *miserable*; the same *Temper and Constitution of Body or Soul* that inclined them to be *wicked* may to be *miserable* also when they live again, and there is as much *Chance* for their living again as for their first Being.

But if all things exist by *Necessity*, then a *Future State* may be *necessary* too, and the *Wicked necessarily miserable* in it, for any thing there is in *this Hypothesis* to the contrary.

Where every thing is supposed *casual* or every thing *necessary*, 'tis impossible to give any reason why any thing that may be conceived future should or should not exist, or should or should not be after such or such a manner; and therefore all things of this nature must be *equally probable*: nothing can

can be alleged to determine the Mind *one way rather than another.*

But, if there be a God, and the World, and all things that are, have been, or are to be are acknowledged to be the Effects of his Will, there are no Reasons to persuade us 'tis more probable that God will not punish the Wicked in another State than that he will; at least they have not yet been produced.

From whence it follows, That it being equally probable in every Hypothesis that the Irreligious will be extremely miserable, they have no more reason to chuse that side they are of than the other, by their own Confession and Account of things; and therefore, in this Case, a Man must not act at all, or, if he does prefer acting one way rather than another, the general Opinion of others concerning the safest side should determine him. But moreover, it is not only as probable that the Irreligious should be miserable in a future state allowing any of their own Hypotheses to be true, but, by their own way of Proof it appears that our Hypothesis is as likely to be true as any advanced by them, nothing further than a Possibility of theirs being aim'd at.

And

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From whence it follows, That it being equally probable in every *Hypothesis* that the *Irreligious* will be *extreamly miserable*, they have *no more reason* to chuse that side they are of than the other, by their own *Confession* and *Account of things*; and therefore, in *this Case*, a *Man* must not act at all, or, if he does prefer acting one way rather than another, the *general Opinion of others* concerning the *safest side* should determine him. But moreover, it is not only as probable that the *Irreligious* should be *miserable* in a *future state* allowing any of their own *Hypotheses* to be true, but, by their own way of *Proof* it appears that our *Hypothesis* is as likely to be true as any advanced by them, nothing further than a *Possibility* of theirs being aim'd at.

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And not only so ; but we do moreover pretend by many direct and positive Arguments to evince the Certainty of ours ; and at the same time to shew all theirs to be absurd and impossible.

Wherefore, if upon an equal Probability we ought to take the safest measures, much more are we obliged so to do when Reason and Happiness are both of the same Side.

Nay farther, He that prefers that Faith and Practice which Eternal Misery in another State is denounc'd against, ought not only to have more Grounds of Probability of his side, but Certainty and Evidence of Conviction ; he should be fully satisfied, from certain direct Principles, that his own Opinions are right, or that the contrary are absurd and irrational : because the Consequences are of that vast importance that the present Inconveniences we are like to sustain by acting a contrary way can bear no proportion to the hazard or likelihood of Misery that attends this.

Thus do we of the Protestant Faith defend our selves against the Papists, when they peremptorily condemn us to everlasting Misery for being of contrary Opinions to theirs,

theirs, without meeting with the same Returns from us; and then urge us to take the *safest side*: Thus, I say, do we answer; did we believe *their Opinions* or *Censures probable*, tho' 'twas *possible*, and to us perhaps seem'd *as probable* or *more so*, that they might be *false*, we would *then* allow some Weight in the Argument: But we do not *now* go over to them upon the account of *Safety*, because we not only *think our Opinions certain* and *theirs impossible, absurd* or *irrational*, and are fully persuaded we have *proved* them so; but, supposing our selves to err in all the Points in controverſie betwixt us, we think it *demonſtrable* from *common Principles*, own'd on *both ſides*, that none of these *Errors*, which, upon due care for better information, are believed by us *as Truths*, can expose us to the *hazard of Damnation*, if in all things else we live up to the Principles of our Religion. And if the *Atheist* and *Irreligious* can make the *ſame Defence* for himſelf; if the *Doctrines of Religion*, and the *ſuppoſed Conſequences of Irreligion* ſeem *as absurd* and *contrary to all the Principles of his Knowledge*, owned by him, as the *Popiſh Tenets*

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Tenets do to a Protestant, or as ridiculous and unwarrantable as the *Visions*, *Refveries* or *Predictions* of every little *Enthusiast* or *Fortune-teller* to a Man of calm, sedate Sense; and he is able to make this good in the usual ways and methods of Reasoning, then may he despise our *Threatnings* and laugh at the *Misery* of a Future State securely.

But to deny all these important concerning Truths, without offering at any Proof of their Falshood; to say they are doubtful and uncertain Points, and yet to act with the same Assurance and Security as if they were certainly false; to refuse our Assent to them for want of greater and more evident Proof, without confuting the Arguments already advanced, or producing stronger on the contrary side; to laugh at the Terrors of the Lord, without proving them first to be vain or resistible; to contradict the general Belief of the World, without making any new Discoveries or Observations; to lay aside a whole Scheme and System of things, which has been proved and established in all the principal Branches and Connexions of it, because we
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are not able to comprehend or account for some little remote Consequence; and to venture eternal Misery upon a seeming Possibility of an Escape, which very few perceive or allow: These are all egregious Instances of the *absurd Faith* and *foolish Conduct* of the *Enemies of Religion*; and consequently good Proofs of the Judgment and Wisdom of those who believe and act upon *contrary Grounds* and *Measures*.

There's another thing also which the *Atheist* commonly discovers his Folly in, and that is the *publishing* and *propagating* his Opinions: For 'tis more the *Atheist's* Interest that *other* People should have *Religion* than 'tis the *Religious Man's*. For, *his whole Happiness* being in *this Life*, the more *other* People are restrain'd, and the better *they* are persuaded *he* acts by the same Rules *they* do, the larger will *his Liberty* and *Advantages* be, and the *less* *he* will suffer from their Designs and Pursuits; whereas the *Religious Man's Rever- sion* is not endanger'd but confirm'd by what he loses or suffers *here*.

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Other Proofs likewise, of the *Unreasonableness* and *Absurdity* of *Irreligion* might be brought from the *Inconsistency* both of the *Faith* and *Practice* of such as are profess'd Favourers of it: such as their Credulity and readiness of Belief in *common* indifferent Matters, and sometimes embracing absurd Opinions exploded by all the World, when at the same time they are distrustful of every thing upon the Subject of *Religion*; their believing Matters that concern their present Happiness upon less Grounds; their exposing themselves to greater Troubles and Inconveniences, and running greater Hazards upon a fainter Prospect of future Happiness in this Life; and sometimes, on the contrary, fearing and avoiding things upon a less Appearance or Likelyhood of Danger than what *Religion* affords; and lastly, their acting contrary to their own Principles, and denying themselves what they esteem substantial Happiness out of a regard to imaginary Notions, which have no Foundation but in the Opinion of Men. But, these being Matters of common Observation, and too long to be fully insisted upon

upon here, I shall think it sufficient to have hinted at them, and so pass on to the

VI. Sixth and last general Branch of my Discourse proposed in the beginning of it, and that is, To give some Account of the *Causes* of all *Atheism* and *Irreligion*, or the *Reasons* that induce Men to take up such Opinions.

There's nothing People are better satisfied of than the Power and Influence of *Prejudices* and *false Motives* of *Judging*; every body being apt to resolve the Cause of another Mans differing in opinion from him into some particular *Byass* upon his Understanding. But this we do commonly without examining whether the Person that differs from us has not better Reasons for his Dissent than we have for our Persuasion; whether the Opinion he is of be not, in the Reality of things, true, tho he believes upon false Grounds; or whether we our selves are not disposed to judg as we do, upon some of the like Motives we suppose him to be directed by.

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by. By which means we are often not only guilty of the same Partiality we charge upon others, but either confirm'd in our Errors, or else prevented from making just Enquiries into the Truth of things; so that, if we are in the right, it is by chance, and more than we are able to prove to our selves or others.

Upon which account I think it a very preposterous and deceitful Method of proving a thing false, to assign some *peculiar Prejudices* and *wrong Motives of judging*, which may *possibly* induce Men to be of such an Opinion, tho the Truth should be of the other side, and which have often had the like Influence upon Men's Understandings in other Matters; and from thence immediately, without any further Proof, to infer, that such and such Persons have *no other Reasons* for their Belief of the point in question, and consequently, that they are in the wrong: this, I say, is not a fair way of arguing. But, after *plain* and *manifest Proofs* of the Truth of an Opinion, according to the *standing Rules* and *Principles of Reasoning*, it is not only *proper* to enquire how any People came to be of a contrary Persua-
sion,

sion, but the Strangeness and seeming Unaccountableness of the thing make it *expected*, and in some respect *necessary*, in order to a fuller Satisfaction of those, who, notwithstanding all the *appearance of Evidence to themselves*, may be apt to have such favourable Notions of Mankind, as not to imagine that Persons who have the same Faculties and all other Advantages of Knowledge as they have should deny what appears so plain to them, without some *rational Grounds* for their Denial.

Having therefore, as I persuade myself, *fully and evidently* proved the *Truth of Religion*; I think, I may now be allow'd to say, That all *Atheism* and *Irreligion* must be the *sole Effect* of *Prejudice* and *Prepossession*, if any such Cause of it is assignable.

And if we search the Heart of Man, and look into the hidden Mysteries of Iniquity lodg'd there, if we consider all the false and corrupt *Reasonings*, and the several Arts and Methods of Deceit which are used by Men to delude themselves, we shall soon discover the secret *Spring* and *Original* of all *Atheism* and *Unbelief*.

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Now,

Now, the *Causes* from whence it proceeds are these two, *The Fear of an After-reckoning for a wicked Life*, and *The Pride and Vanity of appearing greater or wiser than other Men*. The first of which is the principal and most powerful Cause, and is only assisted and strengthened afterwards by the Accession of the latter. And what other Reason can be assigned?

It cannot be the *Force and Evidence of Truth*, as plainly appears, not only from the foregoing *Proofs of Religion*, but from the *Confession and Conduct of the Atheists themselves*. It is not because the *Notions of God, Immortality and a Future State* shock the Understanding, and contradict the plain Principles of Reason, that they deny these Foundations of all *Religion*. Was the *Being of God* consider'd only as an *Hypothesis* to solve the Difficulties of *Nature* by, without those troublesome Consequences of *Duty, Sin and Punishment*, the *Atheist* would not scruple this *Philosophy*, and *Lucretius* himself would easily grant the *Soul* to be *immortal*, to be separated from the *Body* and reunited again, would

would you allow him that Conclusion, that neither *separate* nor *reunited* it hath any *Sense* or *Remembrance* of what was done *before the Separation*. God should also enjoy the *Fulness of Perfection*, he should be clothed with all the *magnificent Attributes* that Man could conceive, so his whole Employment was the *Comprehension of himself*, and the *Contemplation of his own Glory*, and he was not unnecessarily troubled to take account of *our Actions*. This is the dreadful Apprehension that perverts Mens Reason, and makes them deny what they fear, when they are resolved to run the hazard of it.

The quieting and laying these *Fears* *Lucretius* confesses is the *whole Design* of his Philosophy. Which is a farther Confirmation of what I have undertaken to maintain; as will appear from these following Remarks.

For first *this Philosopher* observes, and seems to wonder at it, that the *Fears of Death* were *very general*, and made *strong Impressions* upon the Minds of Men.

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2. He affirms that these Fears were occasioned by an *Apprehension* of some other State after this Life.

3. He takes notice only of those whom we stile *Wicked*, that were afraid of a future State, they were the chief Objects of his Pity and Compassion, who, besides the Fear of *Scourges*, *L. 3. v. 1025, &c.* *Racks* and *Prisons* in this World, were tortured with the Dread of new and more terrible Punishments in some other; and all his Arguments serve only for the Consolation and Encouragement of such unhappy Wretches, who, through Fear of future Pains, either denied themselves some present Gratification, or were uneasy under the Guilt of past Actions, none but the *Wicked* and *Impious* being concerned in all the *Fabulous* and *Poetick* Stories of future Torments, which he derides. *Lib. 5. ver. 1222.*

From all which it is very plain that a Resolution to enjoy the Pleasures of Sin, and live in them without Damp or Disturbance is the reason why Men deny and seek for Arguments to overthrow those Opinions, which would otherwise be embraced

embraced as most rational; as is manifest from *Lucretius's* own Observations.

For the *universal Apprehension* of something after this Life, which he plainly intimates, is no slight Argument of the Truth of another State: as, I am sure, the distinguishing Fears of the Wicked is a very strong Proof of the essential Difference of Good and Evil, and the Dueness of Reward and Punishment accordingly. For, otherwise, why should the Wicked condemn themselves for what they do? or, supposing a future State, why should they expect to be punish'd in it? why should they not rather conceive God to be of their Side, give him contrary Attributes, and make him punish the Righteous and reward the Wicked? or, if that be too harsh a Notion of the Deity, why do they not change the Natures of Good and Evil, call Evil good and Good evil? The Consequence is still the same. If it be Wisdom to live as they do, if they live most up to their Nature, and most agreeably to their Reason, what need they fear? Almighty Wisdom and Perfection will approve and be pleas'd with their Actions. Since

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therefore these Opinions offer too great a Violence to their Reason to be embraced by them, it is plain that they must acknowledge not only that there is a *Difference in Actions*, but that *theirs* are *evil*; not only that *some Actions* deserve *Reward*, and *some Punishment*, but that the *latter* is due to *theirs*, or else what reason is there for Fears? or why do not all Men fear a future State alike, the *Righteous* as well as the *Wicked*? Now, when Men are resolv'd to commit what they know to be *ill* and *punishable*, there is no Refuge left but to contrive some means of *Impunity*, and escaping the Sentence threatned; and this they promise themselves by *denying* either the *Judge* or the *Place of Punishment*. And this is the *true Cause* and *Spring* of *Atheism*. For no Man ever deny'd a *God* that thought his Way and Course of Life acceptable to such a Being; no Man ever questioned a *future State* that could possibly persuade himself, if there was one, *Happiness* would be his Portion in it.

As

As then it is not a *Zeal for Truth* that makes Men *Atheists*, so neither is it a *generous Undertaking* to free the World from the *Bondage of Religion*. For they cannot but be convinc'd that it would be very much for the Advantage of *Society* and *Mankind in general* if all Men liv'd up to the *strict Rules of Religion*. What noble Ideas does such a Speculation as this afford us? and how dismal would the Prospect be, if *Atheism* spread as fast as *Christianity* did in the *first Ages* of the *Gospel*? But not to pursue this any farther, what *Bondage* or *Slavery* is there in *Religion*, and what *Abridgment* of our *Liberty*? Those that bear the Yoke think it easie and pleasant, and, without a *future Reward*, preferable before *Atheism*, as much as a *just and easie Government* is to be preferred before *Anarchy* and *living Wild*. Why then should they who never felt the Burthen complain of the Weight of it? but there are some Pleasures and Enjoyments that Custom hath made them fond of, and rendred difficult to be left off, and therefore they are resolv'd to enjoy them still; which

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they cannot do fully and to the height, without some Damp and Regret till they have got rid of those *Fears* of a *future Punishment* their own *Consciences* and the *general Faith of the World* threaten them with: in order therefore to this End, every little *Objection* or *Suspicion* is improv'd into an *Argument* against *Religion*, and, by the advantage of *strong Wishes* and a *gradual Decay* of *contrary Impressions*, heightned into *Demonstration*; till, what, at first, their *Lusts* suggested to them with a *perhaps* there *may be no such thing* as *God* or a *future State*, is, at last, ripen'd into a *bold Denial*.

And, when they have once got this *Mastery* over themselves, then do they sit free, and despise the rest of the World in *Fetters*, and laugh at what others adore. Then do *Novelty* and *Boldness* pass for *Truth* and the *Pleasure of Believing* is the *Ground of Faith*. For how exquisite and transporting is the *Pleasure* of a *new Notion* or *Invention*? and how are Men's Wits set upon the stretch to find out fresh *Opinions*, and dress up old ones in a different manner, to get the

Character

Character of Men that *think out of the road*: Men shall live like *Beasts* in the State of Nature, and devour one another, couch in their Dens at night, and in the morning seek their Prey: *Beasts*, on the contrary, shall be so rational as to erect Common-wealths and Governments, if it serve for a new Notion to establish the Reputation of the Author.

Besides, the *exposing* and *ridiculing common Opinions*, especially the despising what is very much respected and admired carries a peculiar Satisfaction in it; there being nothing that recommends any Notion or Reflexion, any stroak of Wit or Reason so much as the Boldness of it. From hence it comes to pass that *Treason* and *Blasphemy* are entertained with a greater Gust than *Private Calumny* and *Detraction*; and the same Expression is counted wittier when it strikes at *God* or the *King* than when it is levell'd against a Herd of *common Mortals*: For, to ridicule the greatest Actions that have been done in the World, to laugh at the noblest and most celebrated Schemes of Knowledge that have ever been laid together

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gether, is thought to argue a Spirit capable of greater Performances. And to despise and contemn what the rest of Mankind stand in aw of, seems to shew such a *Superiority of Sense or Courage* as easily tempts Men to affect this Character without considering whether they are able to support it.

Thus are Men confirm'd and establish'd in *Atheism* by the *Pride* and *Vanity* of appearing *greater or wiser than others*, and being thought *Masters of finer and more extraordinary Talents* either of *Wit* or *Reflexion*: as is plain also from another Instance, in which Men shew themselves to be very much influenced by these Motives in matters of Religion; and that is, a groundless unreasonable *Diffidence* and *Jealousie* of being put or imposed upon; calling every thing *Trick* or *Imposture* that they do not understand, or any body else gets an Advantage by. For, by this means, they imagin they establish to themselves a Reputation of great *Sagacity* and *Reach*, and *seeing far into matters*; whereas, in reality, this over-much Cunning of theirs only betrays the
Weakness

Weakness of their Judgments, and shews them to be of the same size of Understanding with those foolish Politicians, who find a thousand Mysteries in State-Affairs more than the Managers themselves ever knew of, and think every the most natural and undesigning Action of a Prince to be the effect of some secret Counsel and Contrivance.

Now, that these beforementioned are the *true* and *proper Causes* of *Atheism*; and that the Belief and Patronage of the *Doctrines* of *Irreligion* is the *sole Result* of *Prejudice*, and not *deliberate Reason*, will further appear from the following Reflexions.

1. Those who go under the Name of *Atheists* or *Deists*, whether *real*, *pretended* or *reputed*, are generally Persons of *no great Reach* or *Capacity*, Men of strong Lusts, and irregular Imaginations, without a due Ballast of Reason; impatient of Thinking and Attention, and consequently, unable to examine any Variety of Preferences, or to distinguish betwixt
Colour

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Colour and Argument. Those of them who are furnish'd with a better stock of *natural Sense*, have it wholly *unimproved* and *uncultivated*; or, if they have made any Advances in Knowledge by Study or Industry, they have either *begun late*, and so fell into the middle of Learning without the Assistance of the first grounds and Rudiments, and applied themselves to such Books they light upon, or which happened to be recommended to them, without due Choice and Direction; or else they have been chiefly conversant in *such Studies* as have by no means qualified them to be Judges out of their own Way.

For a Man may be very well vers'd in *History*, *Antiquities*, or *Experimental Knowledge*; he may be a great Master of *Language* and *Criticism*, and a nice Discerner of the *true Meaning* or *Reading* of an *antient Author*; he may have a just Relish for *Wit* and *Elegance of Expression*, and have Skill enough to discover the *Beauties* and *Faults* of the *most celebrated Models* of Writing: and yet, after all, in matters of *general* and *abstracted Reasoning*,

ing, not be able to understand a plain, easie Consequence. For, 'tis not difficult to observe how ridiculously oftentimes Men of known Abilities in some of these or the like respects, argue and inter; and how incapable they are of making or perceiving a just Deduction, in points of moral or civil Knowledge, and such in which the Conduct of Life and Happiness of Mankind is immediately concerned: whereas, on the contrary, those who are acquainted with the general Rules and Laws of Reasoning, and the different kinds and manners of Proof are capable of making true Judgments and Inferences in any Subject they have been ever so little conversant in, upon a bare explication of the Terms, and just relation of Facts belonging to the Matter to be judg'd of. Now, this is a piece of Knowledge that I may venture to say, the Favourers of Irreligion have been always the greatest Strangers to; and the less any of them have been acquainted with this kind of Learning, the less they have employed and exercised their rational Faculties, and still the less common natural Sense they

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they have been born with, the stronger, more confident, and more unscrupulous Atheists have they been.

2. Secondly, as we are satisfied, from the *Character* and *Capacities* of the *Atheists*, that they are wholly determined to their Opinions by *Prejudices* and *false unequal Motives of Judging*; so are we further confirmed in this Persuasion by the *Manner* and *Process* of their *Faith*. For they commonly *believe first* before they enter upon any *Examination* or *Proof* of their *Principles*. What they understand of the matter, all the Arguments or Objections they are furnish'd with are found out afterwards, not to satisfy and convince themselves, but to make a shew of Defence against the Charge of others; they take up their Opinions hastily and of a sudden; they do not proceed by Degrees, by cautious and wary Steps, weighing and ballancing the Arguments on both sides, sometimes inclining to the one and sometimes to the other, calling in the Advice and Reason of other Men to their assistance, and all along shewing a Concern

Concern and Fear of being mistaken, suitable to the Importance of the thing to be judged of. Thus do Men commonly behave themselves in a Change from *one Sect of Religion to another*, if they sincerely aim at Truth, and are not governed by any other false Motive. But who ever heard of a Man who took this method of turning *Atheist*? Which of them all can say he consider'd and compared the Proofs of both Opinions before he left one and took up the other? When was any body called in to plead in the behalf of *Religion*, before it was cast off, and to settle the first Mistrusts and Waverings of an *Atheistical Conscience*? Afterwards perhaps, upon some Checks and Reluctance of his Mind, an *Atheist* may have had some faint Designs of examining into the Truth of Matters, and may have discours'd with others about it; but then a long custom of thinking and talking one way, and the troublesome Consequences attending a Change of Faith, may have indisposed him to entertain or relish the Arguments for *Religion*, not to mention any thing of

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a *judicial Blindness* inflicted upon him from God, for his long unreasonable Opposition to the *Truth*. But, if an *Atheist* will examine fairly into the *first Rise* and *Original* of his *Faith*, he will find it was a *hasty Effort* occasioned by *high Blood* and a *rais'd Imagination*, or some *bold Strain of Wit*, that struck him when he was rightly disposed to be pleased with it. And, if we should examine into these things more particularly, I believe, it would appear that *all irreligious Opinions* are *first taken up in Company*, and that no Man receives the *first Impressions* of *Atheism* alone from his own *calm* and *sedate Reflexions*.

And thus, as *Irreligion* springs from *Prejudice*, so is it *nourished* and *fed* the *same way*; by a constant Application to such Books and Company as give it any countenance or colour of Defence; with an industrious avoiding and ridiculing the contrary; picking out such things as minister most occasion for Raille-ry; and magnifying every bold thing that is said by any Man, without any regard to his other Opinions, or the Con-sequences

sequences even of that that is liked ; 'tis no matter whether it really proves any thing against Religion or no, so it is thought by the *Professors of Religion* to bear hard either upon the *fundamental Principles*, or any remote *accessional Doctrines* owned by them.

From whence it comes to pass that the *present Atheism* is a *promiscuous Miscellany* of all the bold notions that have ever been vented by those they stile *Free-thinkers*: where, whatever seems to be levelled against any Point of Religion is embraced as the most sensible and rational account that can be given of the thing ; but those Parts of Religion which are established by the same Authors are slighted and past over as weakly done ; whereas I will be bound to prove that there is never an *Article* or *Duty of Religion*, profess'd by us, but is own'd and maintain'd by some or other of these bold *Free-thinking Authors*, which are so highly approved and commended by the *present Atheists*. And what a gross Partiality is this, not to allow those whom they cry up for *unprejudic'd* Men to talk a Word of Sense or

R Reason,

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Reason, but when what they say makes for their Purpose ?

3. But Thirdly, we have a more convincing Proof that the *Doctrines of Irreligion* are the *genuine Issue and Effects* of the *Causes* before assigned, from the open *Confession* of several *Atheists* themselves; who, upon just Convictions of Conscience, having disclaimed their *Atheism*, have freely and sincerely owned that they threw off *Religion* without ever examining or considering the Proofs of it ; that they were disposed and induced to entertain irreligious Notions by the *Power* and Influence of their *Lusts*, or such vicious Habits and Customs of living as they thought irreconcilable with a contrary Belief; that the Reasons why they endeavoured to persuade themselves of what their Course of Life inclined them to believe were, to defend those Liberties of Practice they took against the Censures of others, and to secure their own Minds in an easie undisturb'd Enjoyment of them ; that commonly the first and strongest Impressions
of

of Unbelief were occasioned by some bold Hints and Insinuations, or some witty Ridicule or Raillery upon the Subject of Religion; that, as these either in Books or Discourse, coming from others, gave them very great Pleasure, and by that means Assurance, in embracing these new Principles, so were they further pleased and confirm'd together in their Belief of them, by applauded Trials and Exercise of their own Wit the same way; especially when the general *Disposition* of the Persons they convers'd with, made this Entertainment very agreeable and very frequent. All this have several Atheists, upon their *Repentance*, acknowledged.

And that which strengthens the Argument drawn from hence, is, that those who have renounced their *Irreligious Principles*, and given this account of themselves; have been, some of them, Men of the *best natural Abilities*, and *greatest acquired Improvements*, of any that ever took the Party of *Atheism*, and their *Repentance* has been *free and voluntary*, and not extorted by any frightful Representa-

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tions, or importunate Addresſes, in the ſeaſons of Fear and Weakneſs; it has begun from themſelves, and been wholly owing to the over-ruling Impreſſions of a *Divine Power* and not to *Human Perſuaſion*; and their Blindneſs and Prejudices being, by this means, removed, the Arguments for *Religion* have prevailed upon them by their own Strength, as ſuggeſted to them by their own Reason, without receiving any Advantage from the Management and Art of others.

And this I think ſufficient to ſhew that *Atheiſm* proceeds from *ſtrong Prejudices* and *false, diſproportioned Motions of judging*, and is not the reſult of *juſt Reaſoning* and *impartial Reflexion*.

I have now gone through the ſeveral Branches of my Diſcourſe, I propoſed to my ſelf in the beginning of it; and finiſhed the Proof I undertook of *general* or, as 'tis commonly called, *natural Religion*.

All that I have further to add upon this Subject, at preſent, is, to give ſome
account

account of the Notions of *Atheism* and *Deism*; which Words I have been forced to use sometimes promiscuously, and in a different Sense from the common acceptation, for want of a fit and proper Word to express a *Belief* or *Profession* of any such Opinions which take away the *practical Influence* and *Power of Religion*. For which reason I think it convenient in this place, that I may remedy any Confusion or Mistake, the Liberty I have taken in the use of these Terms may have occasioned, to set down distinctly what I look upon to be the *common Notions* of *Atheism* and *Deism*, and what *Ideas* I should chuse to affix these Words to.

By an *Atheist* is commonly meant such a one as will own *no Being* under the *Name* and *Title* of *God*. And he who does acknowledge such a Being, let his Conceptions of him be what they will, is *no Atheist*. And, in *this Sense* of the Word, it may well be made a question, Whether there be any such thing as an *Atheist* in the World? For, 'tis hard to

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find a Man who has not *some Idea* in his Mind, which he will allow the *Name of God* to : tho, upon Examination, perhaps it will be found to be nothing else but a confused Notion of *some vast Power, First Cause, Original Mover, or Immortal Being, enjoying Eternal Rest and Quiet.*

Now, according to this Notion of *Atheism*, he who professes to *believe a God*, whatever *Nature, Characters and Attributes* he ascribes to him, and *Denies* his *Providence or Government of Mankind* is called a *Deist*.

But, in such places where the Pretences of *Revelation* are acknowledged and defended, he that is called a *Deist* is one that owns a *God*, and believes *some sort of Providence, and natural Obligations*, but denies *all manner of Revelation* ; confines his *Duty* to matters of *Civil Justice and Commerce* ; makes these his chief *Principles, not to injure another, and to keep his Word* ; grounds his Practice upon the *Reason and Interest of Societies*, and his own present *Advantage*, not *Obedience to God, or a future Prospect* ; believes,

lieves *no future Life*, or at least *such a one* as can have no great Influence upon a Mans Actions here. This is the *common general Use* of these Words.

But, by an *Atheist*, I think, may properly and justly be meant, not only he that *absolutely denies the Being of a God*, but whosoever says *there is no God that governs the World, and judgeth the Earth*; there is *no God that has appointed Laws and Rules for Men to act by*; there is *no God to whom Men are accountable for all their Actions*, and by whom they shall be rewarded or punished in a future State according to their Behaviour here; and, in general, whoever holds such an Opinion which exempts him from all Obligation of Duty to a Superiour Being, or cuts off the Expectation of Rewards and Punishments consequent thereupon.

For *Atheism* is to be considered as a Vice and not a *meer Error in Speculation*. And therefore, he that denies *Providence, Natural Law, or a Future State*, is as much an *Atheist* as he that denies *God's Being*: For, it's all one, with re-

spect to Practice, to say *there is no God*, as to say *there's no Obedience due to him*, or *no Punishment for Disobedience*, if there be: it is likewise all one to deny *divine Punishment directly*, and to deny the *Immortality of the Soul*, or the *Scriptures*, in the Sense of those who at present deny these things: For they who say the *Soul dies with the Body*, think hereby to prove that *God cannot punish*; and they who deny the *Scriptures* do it in order to shew that he *will not punish*, that is, *in another Life*; and, as to the present, they perceive that those who are stiled *Wicked* fare as well, and have as large a Portion of the good things of this World as their *Righteous Brethren*. The End and Design then of all these Opinions is the same; namely, to establish a *Liberty for every Man to live as he pleases*, and to do *whatsoever is right in his own Eyes*; and what is this but to say, *there is no God in Israel*?

This is the Notion I have of an *Atheist*; and accordingly I have applied the word *indifferently*, as I had occasion, to any Persons that denied any of the Principles

ciples of Religion I have endeavour'd to establish: And I have us'd the word *Deist* in the same Sense with that of *Atheist*, every where but where I am particularly concern'd in the Proof of *God's Being*, as distinguished from the *other Parts of Religion*.

But here, in opposition to the Character I have now given of an *Atheist*, by a *Deist* is to be meant such a one who acknowledges *all the Principles of Religion here maintained*; who thinks he is obliged to inform himself truly of his whole Duty to God, and to live up to the highest and purest Rules of *Morality* he can form to himself, by the Assistance of his own Reason, and the united Lights of other Men; who looks upon all the *moral or practical Part of the Scriptures* as very useful and instructive, and consequently to be read and valued as *Tully and Aristotle* are, upon the same Subject: but does not believe any such thing as *Revelation*, or assent to any of those *peculiar matters of Fact, or Doctrines* which are wholly grounded upon *that extraordinary way of Conveyance,*

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Conveyance, and are not level to his Reason or discoverable by it.

And, if a *Deist* be such as I have described, it would be as just a matter of Enquiry whether there be any Persons to whom this Title belongs, as whether there be any real *Atheists* in the World. For my part, I will not positively say there is no such thing as a *true Deist*, in that sense I have given of the word, because, I believe, there hardly was any Opinion known among Men, that some body was not of; but this, I think, I may venture to affirm, that it would be the difficultest thing imaginable to find a Man in a *Christian Countrey*, who was acquainted with the Books of *Holy Scripture*, and the *common Proofs of Christianity*; who was fully persuaded of the Truth of *all the Principles of Natural Religion here laid down*, and seriously endeavoured to conform his Life according to the *Moral Rules and Precepts of the Gospel*, and yet denied *Revelation*, and all those particular Truths which stand distinguished by the Name of *Revealed Religion*: such a Man as this, I believe, is hard to be

be met with. For it is not *Prophecies* or *Miracles* or *Mysteries* that puzzle the *Faith* of those that now go under the Name of *Deists*; but a *plain* and *full Discovery* of a *future State* of *Rewards* and *Punishments*. This is the shocking repugnant Doctrine, in comparison of which the *Trinity* and *Incarnation* are easie Notions and very reconcileable to their Reason.

Upon this account it is, that I have several times mentioned *Deists* as *Enemies* of *Natural Religion*, and so properly coming within my Subject, and not as *meer Opposers* of *Revelation*, which belongs to another Argument.

And now, having pointed out who they are that are particularly concerned in the foregoing Discourse, it might be expected that I should address my self to them to embrace those Principles of Religion I have there proved, and to bestow some serious Thoughts about the Danger of their Unbelief; but I am too well acquainted with their Character to trouble them with any
Advice

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Advice of this nature : If they are not convinced and bore down by Arguments, I am sure they will never yield to *Persuasion* ; neither indeed is it proper to go about to persuade Men to *believe* ; they only are to be applied to in this manner, who are satisfied of the Truth of what you would persuade them to, but want sufficient Motives and Incitements to *practise*.

I shall therefore shut up this whole Discourse with my earnest Prayers to God, that he would be pleased to incline and dispose those who are doubtful and wavering in the Concerning Points of Religion, to weigh and consider well the Proofs it stands upon, before they venture to withdraw themselves from under the Influence and Government of it ; that he would defend the Innocent, and such as are unacquainted with the Ways of Irreligion, from the false Suggestions, and Insinuations of Unbelievers ; that he would convince the Careless and Indifferent of the absolute Necessity of having some Religion ; and that he would be further pleased to enable

enable those that are already convinced of this Truth to stop the mouths of Gain-sayers, by a steady and uniform Practice of their Duty every way answerable to their Knowledge and Profession.

FINIS.

ERRATA.

In the Preface, p. v. l. 2. for *corruptions* r. *conceptions*.

IN the Book, Pag. 26. l. 9. for *probable* read *possible*. p.
47. l. 21. *the* r. *our*. p. 74. l. 24. *extension-modification*
r. modification-extension. l. 26. *motion-matter* r. *matter-mo-*
tion. p. 89. l. 21. *than any* r. *than in any*. p. 95. l. ult. *del.*
have. p. 113. *absolutely* r. *absolute*. p. 127. l. 22. *d. him*
p. 132. *latter end*, r. *observations. proportioned. efficacy*. p.
142. l. 19. *thst. r. their*. l. 27. *defining* r. *desiring*. p. 151.
Leula r. , p. 162. l. 15. *to hap. r. to his happiness* p. 165. l.
antepenult. r. ? p. 169. l. *antepenult. when, d.* , p. 174.
l. 13. *d. to*. p. 175. l. 16. *and there* r. *and then there*. p.
187. l. 20. *d. 4.* p. 188. l. 1. *r. advance or profess*. p. 189.
l. 6. *d. the*. p. 194. l. 16. *may make* r. *may be able to make*.
p. 201. l. 8. *r. variety*. p. 208. l. *antepenult. r. are any such*.
209. l. ult. *one* r. *an*. p. 210. l. 10. *these--Considerations*. p.
238. l. 16. *serve* r. *selves*.

